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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

**2022 Annual Report
on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments
in 2021**

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1. Introduction: EU response to world developments in 2021

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the European Union's (EU's) external relations throughout 2021. The Global Health Summit in Rome held in May defined the common principles to overcome the current COVID-19 pandemic, but also to prepare for future pandemics. The European Commission, Member States and financial institutions – acting in a 'Team Europe' approach – shared over 380 million vaccine doses, the majority of which was channelled through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) mechanism, and also provided substantial technical assistance to partner countries to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March, the Commission made proposals to strengthen the EU's **global humanitarian impact**. The Communication on the EU's humanitarian action¹ proposed key actions to expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid by supporting humanitarian partners, expanding the donor base and addressing the root causes of crises through a 'Team Europe' approach. As a milestone in its **development cooperation**, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe), with an initial funding of EUR 79.5 billion, will finance EU cooperation with non-EU countries from 2021 until 2027.

The off-budget **European Peace Facility**, for which the Commission acts as administrator for assistance measures, was established on 22 March 2021. The implementation of the first assistance measures adopted by the Council started during the year.

The EU further worked on a stronger and deeper cooperation with **Africa**. In October, EU and African foreign affairs ministers met in Kigali, Rwanda, to take stock of the Africa-EU partnership and define joint priorities ahead of the European Union-African Union Summit in February 2022. The **new partnership agreement** ('post-Cotonou') between the EU and members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States was initialled on 15 April 2021. It establishes a 20-year framework for political and economic relations and cooperation priorities.

In October, the EU updated its **Arctic policy** to focus on climate action and environmental protection, on green jobs and on increasing international cooperation across the Arctic region. During the 2021 International Ocean Governance Forum, the EU presented its recommendations on **ocean sustainability**.

At the EU-Western Balkans Summit at Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia, held in October, the EU reaffirmed its support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and welcomed the commitment of the Western Balkans partners to the European perspective. The Commission started to implement the revised enlargement methodology reflected in the Commission's 2021 Enlargement Package² adopted on 19 October.

The sixth **Eastern Partnership Summit** took place in December. The leaders of the EU institutions, Member States, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine set out their shared vision for the future of the Eastern Partnership. The summit endorsed the renewed agenda for the Eastern Partnership, focusing on recovery, resilience and reform, and built on the two pillars of governance and investment, as outlined in the proposal presented by the Commission and the High Representative in July 2021. Following the military build-up in and around **Ukraine**, the

¹ [COM\(2021\) 110 final of 10 March 2021](#).

² [COM\(2021\) 644 final of 19 October 2021](#).

European Council conclusions of 16 December³ stressed the urgent need for **Russia** to de-escalate tensions and highlighted that any further military aggression against Ukraine would have massive consequences and severe costs in response, including restrictive measures coordinated with partners.

In February, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted the new Agenda for the Mediterranean⁴ to renew the partnership with its **Southern Neighbourhood**. This also includes a dedicated economic and investment plan with initiatives in strategic sectors to support long-term socio-economic recovery.

Looking to Asia, possible cooperation with **China** on security and foreign policy was discussed at the EU-China Strategic Dialogue on 28 September. The human rights situation in Xinjiang continued to be a source of concern and, on 22 March, the EU imposed sanctions under the **Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime**. Sanctions were also issued against individuals and entities from Eritrea, Libya, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia and South Sudan. Following the developments in **Afghanistan** over the summer the EU announced a support package worth EUR 1 billion for the Afghan people and neighbouring countries, addressing the urgent needs in the country and the region. During the **EU-India** Leaders' Meeting in Porto, the EU and India agreed a comprehensive connectivity partnership that covers cooperation in the digital, energy, transport, and people-to-people sectors.

Concerning the EU's relations with the Americas, the **EU-Latin America and Caribbean** Leaders' Meeting in December 2021 marked the resumption of bi-regional dialogue at the highest-level, six years after the last summit.

In 2021, in spite of the constraints posed by COVID-19, the EU deployed six **election observation missions** to The Gambia, Honduras, Iraq, Kosovo*, Venezuela and Zambia – smaller missions of electoral experts, as well as follow-up missions, were also deployed to more than 10 countries.

Finally, in December, the EU launched its new flagship initiative: the **Global Gateway**⁵. Its goal is to connect goods, people and services around the world in a sustainable way. It will develop sustainable and high-quality connections while ensuring financial sustainability, with funding from the EU, its Member States, and European financial institutions totalling up to EUR 300 billion between 2021 and 2027.

Under the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, a single instrument, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe), integrates most external financing instruments that existed as separate basic acts under the former multiannual financial framework. This Annual Report covers the following external financing instruments under the MFF 2021-2027: the NDICI-Global Europe, the Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland (DOAG), the European Instrument for International

³ [Council Conclusions of 16 December 2021](#).

⁴ [JOIN\(2021\) 2 final of 9 February 2021](#).

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁵ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 1 December 2021](#).

Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III). This Annual Report also covers ongoing programmes financed through instruments managed by Commission departments in the previous MFF: the European Development Fund (EDF) and all instruments funded by Budget Heading IV (Europe in the World), namely: the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Partnership Instrument (PI), Humanitarian Aid, the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) and the Instrument for Greenland.

1.1. International Partnerships

In 2021, in line with the new geopolitical ambition and commitment to the 2030 Agenda, the Commission launched the Global Gateway, a new European strategy to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy and transport, and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. It stands for sustainable and trusted connections that tackle the most pressing global challenges, from climate change and protecting the environment, to improving health security, boosting EU competitiveness and securing global supply chains. Global Gateway aims to mobilise up to EUR 300 billion in investments between 2021 and 2027 using EU and Member States' potential to underpin a lasting global recovery, taking into account our partners' needs and the EU's own interests. Global Gateway is about increasing investments promoting democratic values and high standards, good governance and transparency, equal international partnerships, and green and clean, secure infrastructures that can all catalyse private sector investment.

The Commission and the High Representative also put forward a new strategy to strengthen the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism. The Joint Communication⁶ lays out the EU's expectations of and ambitions for the multilateral system. It frames a more strategic approach to our international partnerships and alliances in the context of an evolving and more competitive multilateral environment. It maps out the main goals and means at the EU's disposal, including its extensive political, diplomatic and financial support to promote multilateral solutions to global challenges. In this context, the EU actively continues to engage in development-related multilateral processes in the United Nations (UN) and other fora.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have dramatic consequences around the world. It claimed millions of lives, halted economies, disrupted societies and exposed inequalities. It has also set back progress in the implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially in the most vulnerable countries. The EU responded to the crisis beyond our borders using the whole toolbox of our external action instruments. The SDGs remain the compass for charting sustainable growth out of this multi-dimensional crisis.

Up to the end of 2021, in a 'Team Europe' approach, the EU, its Member States and European financial and implementing agencies disbursed EUR 47.7 billion overall in support to partner countries to address the acute and longer-term consequences of the pandemic and deliver on its promises with concrete results. This disbursement exceeds by far the initial EUR 20 billion Team

⁶ [JOIN\(2021\) 3 final of 17 February 2021.](#)

Europe support package pledged in spring 2020, a pledge which had increased to EUR 53.7 billion by the end of 2021. The EU has also played a leading role in setting up the COVAX Facility, the only global initiative supporting fair distribution of vaccines around the world. As of June 2021, the EU and its Member States' contribution to the COVAX Facility totalled over EUR 3 billion.

While addressing the impact of COVID-19 in the most vulnerable countries was the immediate priority, the EU did not lose sight of the need to advance on the green and digital transitions. In our pursuit of sustainable development for all, the global recovery provides opportunities to address the needs of women and young people in particular.

The EU remains one of the few actors with a global presence and a comprehensive policy toolbox able to respond and support our partners around the world. The EU and its Member States are committed to taking account of development cooperation objectives in the external and internal policies that affect developing countries. The 2017 European Consensus on Development reaffirmed the importance of policy coherence for development.

The EU also worked to project EU interests abroad in areas ranging from trade and investment, climate change, the protection of the environment, and migration, to security and defence, helping to create a level playing field and contributing to the rules-based multilateral order.

1.2. European Neighbourhood Policy

In 2021, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) mobilised significant political and financial support for its four priorities⁷ and fully integrated the principles of inclusivity, differentiation and shared ownership.

The EU continued to assist Neighbourhood countries in tackling the causes of instability through a sustained focus on good governance and the rule of law and human rights, both in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood. Significant efforts at country and regional levels continued to reinforce the capacity of civil society across the region, as well as governments' accountability. Similarly, the EU continued to support prosperity in its Neighbourhood, aiming to unleash the untapped economic potential through economic and investment plans.

The EU's relations with its Eastern neighbours are guided by the Global strategy and the revised Eastern Partnership policy. At the Sixth Eastern Partnership Summit in December 2021, leaders of the EU and Eastern partners endorsed the post-2020 renewed Eastern Partnership agenda focused on recovery, resilience and reform. This vision is based on the two pillars of governance and investments, under the overarching objective of strengthening resilience. The priority areas are: (1) accountable institutions, the rule of law, and security; (2) resilient, sustainable and integrated economies; (3) environmental and climate resilience; (4) resilient digital transformation; and (5) resilient, gender-equal, fair and inclusive societies.

The European Commission will mobilise, through the regional economic and investment plan (EIP), up to EUR 2.3 billion of funding from the EU budget over the next five years to support socio-economic recovery. Using specific tools, including blending and guarantees, this could leverage up to EUR 17 billion in public and private investments across the region. Flagship initiatives have been

⁷ The ENP's priority areas are: good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law; economic development for stabilisation; security; and migration and mobility.

identified under the EIP for each partner country to kick-start implementation. While the Belarus regime has decided to suspend its participation in the Eastern Partnership, the EU continues to support citizens and civil society in Belarus.

In 2021 Ukraine and the EU continued to move closer together, and the impressive portfolio of support programmes as well as the many ongoing policy dialogues made a significant contribution to this effort. Considerable progress has been achieved in many areas, including in the judicial area, especially tackling issues of rule of law and anti-corruption.

The situation in the Neighbourhood South remained challenging and the already dire socio-economic conditions were aggravated by the consequences of the pandemic. In addition to that, the protracted crisis in Syria continued to impact on the stability of the whole Middle East, while in Libya the elections that were expected to be held in December in the context of the Berlin process were postponed, leading to uncertainties as to the future of the transition process.

The March 2021 Brussels V Conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region reiterated the political, humanitarian and financial commitment of the international community in support of the Syrian people and the neighbouring countries most affected by the conflict.

Throughout the Neighbourhood South region, governance and human rights remained at stake, and space for free expression and civil society was shrinking. Economic conditions remained a matter of concern. Generating growth and jobs continued to be a priority, particularly for the youth that represents a significant part of the population. Youth unemployment and lack of opportunities were among the main drivers of migration. In addition, trade barriers were increasing and regional integration remained limited, due to lack of cooperation among the countries themselves.

In this challenging context, in February 2021 the Commission and the High Representative adopted a new Agenda for the Mediterranean to relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood partners. It was accompanied by an economic and investment plan, identifying flagship initiatives which will enable the EU to focus resources on key transformative sectors, and mobilise additional funds from International Financial Institutions and the private sector. The EU Trade Policy Review Communication⁸ adopted in February 2021 put forward a sustainable investment initiative to interested countries in the Southern neighbourhood, and expressed readiness to discuss with Morocco and Tunisia options to modernise trade and investment relations. The Commission also stepped up efforts to ensure the proper implementation of the free trade agreements concluded with countries in the Neighbourhood South region.

Migration remained high on the EU agenda. The EU continued to support those affected by the crises in Syria and Libya by assisting migrants, displaced persons, refugees and host communities. This was achieved mainly through the two dedicated Trust Funds (the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa / the North Africa window and the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis / Madad). Although both Trust Funds expired at the end of 2021, the implementation of ongoing actions will continue and will provide a bridge towards new actions under the 2021-2027 programming. In the Eastern Neighbourhood, the EU reacted quickly to Belarus's instrumentalisation of migrants by recalibrating EU assistance away from the central Belarussian authorities, while at the same time stepping up support for the people of Belarus. Moreover, following the crisis in Afghanistan, the EU

⁸ [COM\(2021\) 66 final of 18 February 2021](#).

monitored closely arrivals from the country to the EU's neighbouring regions, and expressed readiness to provide support where needed.

The European Commission's institution building instruments contributed to the overall reform process in the European Neighbourhood in line with EU political priorities, notably the European Green Deal, Digital transformation and the regional economic and investment plans. TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) mobilised over 8 000 participants and Twinning pooled EUR 155 million worth of assistance in public-to-public projects between Member States' Administrations and Partner Countries.

1.3. EU enlargement

The enlargement methodology was revised in 2020 to further strengthen the accession process by making it more predictable, more credible, dynamic and subject to stronger political direction. During the first political intergovernmental conferences the EU held with Montenegro and Serbia in June 2021, the two countries agreed to apply the revised methodology. The first negotiating cluster with Serbia (Cluster 4 on the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity) was opened at another intergovernmental conference with Serbia in December 2021, which also demonstrated the EU's commitment to the accession process.

On 19 October 2021, the European Commission adopted the 2021 Enlargement Package, the first one prepared under the revised methodology. As in previous years, the package took stock of developments since the previous Enlargement Package adopted in October 2020. Following the cluster approach for the first time, it examined the progress made by the Western Balkans and Turkey, the challenges encountered and reforms to be addressed, and set out conclusions and recommendations for the period ahead. It took into account the specific circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which had influenced developments in the EU and the region.

Progress on the enlargement agenda was accompanied by the kick-off of the implementation of the EUR 9 billion economic and investment plan (EIP) and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. Adopted by the Commission in October 2020, the Plan aims to bridge the socio-economic gap between the region and the EU and associate the region with key EU initiatives and priorities of the current Commission, including the green and digital transition, promotion of innovation and connectivity, and support for the development of the private sector and human capital. The EIP also carries a strong regional cooperation element, by supporting the gradual establishment of a Common Regional Market in the Western Balkans. The EIP relies on the successful roll-out of the Instrument of Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III), which was adopted in the last quarter of 2021. The Commission, together with the beneficiary partners, successfully concluded the first IPA III programming exercise committing more than EUR 4.1 billion with 75 % of this amount contributing directly to the EIP, and including 21 flagship investment projects chiefly in the fields of transport, energy and green transition.

The commitment of the EU and its Member States to close cooperation with the region was also epitomised in two summits in 2021: the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Brdo (October) and the Berlin Process Summit in Berlin (July). Both summits focussed on tightening regional cooperation, as well as political support for the initiatives related to the implementation of the EIP.

In particular, the Western Balkan leaders adopted a detailed action plan for the implementation of the Green Agenda, a roadmap for the reduction of roaming charges between the EU and the region

was prepared, the EU launched the Agenda for the Western Balkans on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, and the region adopted action plans for rail, road, road safety, transport facilitation and waterborne transport developed under the Transport Community.

More limited progress was achieved with regards to the implementation of the Common Regional Market agreed at the Berlin Process Summit in Sofia in 2020. Work was concluded at technical level – with support of key regional organisations like the Regional Cooperation Council and the Central European Free Trade Agreement CEFTA – on a number of important agreements relating to freedom of movement and mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications; however, political obstacles prevented their adoption and entering into force.

Following the de-escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean, dialogue and cooperation with Turkey increased in 2021, in particular in the areas of common interest like climate change, trade, health, migration and security. Nevertheless, the situation in Varosha in Cyprus, Turkey's backsliding on reforms, its deviations from the obligations under the Customs Union and its assertive foreign policy actions, continued to complicate EU-Turkey relations as well as Turkey's relations with individual Member States.

The EU's serious concerns on the continued deterioration of democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary were not addressed, and Turkey's accession negotiations remained at a standstill. Following the review of the framework for restrictive measures in response to Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Council extended these for another year until 12 November 2022. The March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement continued to deliver results and Turkey plays a key role in addressing migration along the eastern Mediterranean route.

The year 2021 continued to be marked by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To address these challenges, the EU, itself seriously affected, provided extensive support to governments particularly in the Western Balkans. In 2020, the EU reallocated financial assistance in view of the urgencies faced by the region, both in terms of health and socio-economic needs. The Commission has mobilised a package of over EUR 1.6 billion to the benefit of Western Balkans citizens and businesses. Both the Economic Reactivation Package and the package of support to vulnerable groups and the health sector (including for access to vaccines) started to be implemented in 2021. In addition, a new project was signed with the World Health Organisation (WHO), which focuses on promoting COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, building health hazard preparedness and taking steps towards ensuring financing for universal healthcare. By the end of 2021, 89 % of contracts and 61 % of payments of the IPA-related COVID-19 financial assistance package had been achieved. The COVID-19 response for the Western Balkans includes a EUR 70 million grant for vaccine purchases and administration, which enabled them to receive 651 000 vaccine doses in the spring and summer across the region with an additional 400 000 in December in Albania alone, and also significant quantities of vaccine related equipment were supplied.

Turkey chose not to request the redirection of EU grant funding under the IPA programme or the Facility for Refugees for the COVID-19 response. However, under existing financial commitments, contingencies and savings were mobilised. In total, support to the Western Balkans and Turkey from the EU and its Member States amounted to more than EUR 5.2 billion. In 2021, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Turkey successfully joined the EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate scheme.

1.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection

The year 2021 was still largely driven by the lasting COVID-19 crisis – a global health emergency that continued to require an unprecedented, coordinated response both within and outside the EU. In addition, large-scale disasters that occurred during the summer months of 2021 - forest fires in the south of Europe and floods in Western Europe - highlighted the impact of climate change.

Humanitarian needs continued to increase to an all-time high, driven largely by the resurgence of conflicts, combined with the impact of climate change, environmental degradation, global population growth and failed governance. In 2021, the Commission delivered a strong and coordinated response in Europe and beyond and was a key player in tackling the COVID-19 crisis globally.

In March 2021, the **Commission Communication** on ‘the EU’s humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles’⁹ was adopted, which sets out how the EU, with its partners and other donors, can address more effectively the growing humanitarian needs and provide a better enabling environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid. The Communication identified a number of emerging policy approaches, which will be further developed in the coming years in conjunction with existing policies. As part of the Communication, the Commission laid the ground for establishing a European Humanitarian Response Capacity: a new instrument that enables the Commission to directly fill critical gaps in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly in the area of humanitarian logistics and supply chain.

The Commission had to intervene in support of humanitarian organisations in the field in a wide range of crisis-affected countries and regions, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Yemen, South Sudan, Venezuela, the Sahel region and Ukraine. The larger part of EU humanitarian funding was dedicated to addressing needs arising from protracted crises, mainly driven by conflict and compounded by COVID-19. Humanitarian operations were deployed in more than 80 countries, covering 98 % of the countries for which the UN launched an appeal.

In 2021, specific attention was given to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa. To this end, the Commission mobilised EUR 100 million with a view to assist national health systems in implementing vaccination campaigns against COVID-19 and to facilitate the ‘last mile delivery’ of vaccines.

In order to contribute to address global climate change in humanitarian aid, the Commission developed in 2021 minimum environmental requirements for partners in priority areas where readily available solutions can provide the greatest environmental benefits. These were launched at the European Humanitarian Forum in March 2022.

The EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) was activated an unprecedented 114 times in 2021, for a wide range of disasters, and was in a position to provide assistance in 91 % of the cases. Even with resource constraints and competing demands on a global scale in response to the pandemic, the UCPM facilitated the delivery of numerous items of critical personal protective and medical equipment, including almost 30 million COVID-19 vaccine doses. 95 air operations were organised under UCPM to evacuate EU citizens and persons under EU duty of care from Afghanistan. The UCPM response outside Europe was effective, with an 87 % response rate to the 78 requests submitted through the Mechanism.

⁹ [COM\(2021\) 110 final of 10 March 2021](#).

The rescEU stockpile established in March 2020 and further developed throughout 2020 and 2021 consists of an EU safety net stockpile of COVID-19 countermeasures, Personal Protective Equipment items (e.g. masks, million gloves etc.) and medical equipment (ventilators, oxygen concentrators) mobilised both inside and outside the EU. The rescEU stockpile facilitated improved preparedness that enabled the UCPM to facilitate the delivery of millions of personal protective equipment items, medical counter measures and vaccines, both to non-EU countries and to EU Member States and Participating States.

1.5. Security and defence

2021 was a year of transitions. Geopolitical changes have intensified with power politics repeatedly challenging the EU and its values. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate an already challenging security environment. The EU continued its efforts to combat the pandemic through a collaborative crisis management approach, and through its 'Team Europe' approach the EU and its Member States have shared more than 385 million vaccine doses with partner countries.

In addition to handling the pandemic, the EU responded to one crisis after another, with Belarus, Ukraine, Mali, Sudan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Venezuela dominating the international and EU agenda. In 2021, the European External Action Service (EEAS) contributed to the consular crisis response deployed by Member States to coordinate efforts to repatriate EU citizens affected by consular crises, in particular in Afghanistan, Nepal, Ethiopia, and in the wake of the border measures taken during the Omicron-variant COVID-19 outbreak. The UCPM was used to finance these evacuation/repatriation operations.

By establishing the European Peace Facility (EPF) on 22 March 2021, the EU expanded its ability to provide security for its citizens and its partners. Notably, it enables the EU to support its partners with all types of military equipment and security infrastructure, in compliance with the highest human rights standards. In 2021, EPF-funded actions amounted to almost EUR 377 million, of which EUR 260 million supported assistance measures. The bulk of the support went to the military components of African-led Peace Support Operations previously funded under the African Peace Facility in Somalia and the Sahel. Other assistance measures served to provide military equipment linked to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions/operations, such as in Mozambique, and strengthen the military and defence capacities of partners in the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans. The EPF also provided EUR 117 million in common costs for military CSDP missions and operations.

On 15 October 2021, the Council adopted a Decision launching the European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique)¹⁰. The mission supports a more efficient and effective response by the Mozambican armed forces to the crisis in the Cabo Delgado province, by providing training and capacity building. Over two years, the strategic objective is to support the capacity building of the units of the Mozambican armed forces that will be part of a future Quick Reaction Force. In particular, the mission will provide military training including operational preparation, specialised training on counterterrorism, and training and education on the protection of civilians, especially women and girls in conflict, and provide compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law.

¹⁰ [Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2021/1818 of 15 October 2021](#) launching the European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique).

Furthermore, the EU continued enhancing its role as a global actor in conflict analysis and prevention. The EEAS engaged in regular Horizon Scanning and launched – in close cooperation with Commission services and EU Delegations - approximately 25 conflict analyses in countries deemed at risk of instability or violent conflict, either as part of the EU conflict Structural Country Assessment (SCA), or as required by the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation¹¹. EU Conflict Analyses identify EU conflict prevention actions, inform EU security and defence engagements, and help to ensure the conflict sensitivity of EU external action (including EPF support). The EEAS furthermore started to implement the 2020 Concept on EU Peace Mediation carrying out several mediation support missions and developing innovative approaches to mediation, including Article 28 actions.

2021 provided further evidence that without peace the efforts to eradicate poverty and inequality will be seriously compromised. The EU therefore continued to promote an integrated approach to peace and stability, working in over 50 countries affected by conflict and fragility. During 2021, the EU supported security targeted actions such as Security Sector Reform, effective border management, tackling organised crime, counterterrorism, and countering violent extremism, and addressed root causes of insecurity and grievances, such as access to natural resources, governance, support to civil society, and many others. Moreover, in the digital era, sustainable development is closely linked with the presence of a global, open stable and secure cyberspace. In this vein, in 2021, the EU invested to support the resilience of partner countries in the cyber domain, including through support to civilian and military critical infrastructure.

In November 2021, the EEAS presented the Strategic Compass to the EU Member States. The Strategic Compass defines the EU's goals in the area of security and defence and link these to concrete objectives and deliverables for the next 5-10 years. It provides a common answer to the threats and challenges the EU is facing, as identified in the first-ever comprehensive threat analysis conducted in 2021. It guides the EU's efforts on how to better act and prepare, anticipate and secure, invest and innovate, and cooperate with and support partners.

NATO and the EU continued to deepen their cooperation. Progress has been made in a number of areas within 74 common proposals, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as countering disinformation and hostile propaganda, responding to cyber threats and strengthening resilience and civil preparedness. NATO and the EU are also increasingly involved in each other's exercises. This helps NATO and the EU to improve their knowledge of each other's working methods and their ability to coordinate.

1.6. Crisis response and preparedness

Despite the continued challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition to the new Multi-annual Financial Framework and a new single financing instrument, the EU continued to implement its integrated approach to conflicts and crises. This included timely crisis response interventions under the Rapid Response Pillar of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) and common foreign and security policy actions across the world. NDICI-Global Europe emphasises conflict prevention by means of early warning, conflict-analysis capacity building, training, promoting good governance and respect for universal

¹¹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

human rights. Furthermore, 2021 was the first year for both the **European Defence Fund** and the **European Peace Facility**.

The EU continued to work with partner countries worldwide through long-term actions to build and enhance capacities to tackle global and trans-regional threats, ranging from terrorism and organised crime to threats to cyber and maritime security. Furthermore, the EU operates civilian and military missions worldwide under the Common Security and Defence Policy which focus on wide-ranging action from support for border management to training local police.

Through its actions, the EU contributed to:

- conflict prevention;
- mediation, dialogue and peace building;
- stabilisation and human security;
- strengthening the rule of law;
- the fight against violent extremism, stigmatisation and disinformation; and
- security sector reforms.

The EU is focused on the internal/external security nexus, including in the area of counterterrorism and the prevention of violent extremism, and on assisting reforms in the area of the rule of law and anti-corruption, as well as actions in other areas of risk, such as, security implications of climate change and environmental degradation. Such areas are key for sustainable development and good governance in partner countries that directly impacts the internal security of the EU itself.

The EU seeks to respond rapidly and flexibly to changing priorities and emerging threats. To this end, it seeks to broaden partnerships, promote European values and build new cross-regional alliances and project influence, thereby contributing to the security of the EU and its citizens from both an internal and external perspective.

The EU also continued to pursue its strategic interests through fostering dialogue on values and global challenges with key partners across the world and through economic cooperation, trade and investments. This boosts the EU's position as a credible partner that delivers and contributes to fundamental principles related to human rights and gender equality, which are cross-cutting themes in all EU policies.

Engagement with international organisations remains an EU priority and is reflected in its sustained commitment to the rule-based multilateral order. Regular situation awareness exercises and information-exchanges take place with the UN to coordinate international efforts in conflict and post-conflict settings. Regular operational exchanges and working level discussions also take place with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and with other international organisations and agencies to avoid duplication and to optimise results of EU external action.

1.7. Human rights and democracy

In a global context of continued shrinking civic and democratic space and multiple attacks on the universality of human rights exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, the EU reaffirmed its unconditional support to the protection and promotion of human rights, including gender equality, and democracy worldwide. The adoption, on 8 December 2021, of the NDICI-Global Europe programme on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2021-2027, worth EUR 1.5 billion, demonstrates the seriousness of the EU's commitments in this field.

In 2021, the EU continued to work to advance the human rights and democracy agenda at country, regional and international level.

At country level, the EU supported 132 new initiatives led by civil society organisations, in particular local ones, to protect and promote human rights in over 70 partner countries. After a marked slow-down due to COVID-19 restrictions, electoral observation activities took a fresh start with the successful deployment of six EU election observation missions in Africa (Zambia, the Gambia), Latin America (Honduras, Venezuela), the Middle East (Iraq) and Europe (Kosovo) to assess and help improve electoral processes.

At regional and international levels, the EU continued to support international and regional human rights organisations and systems, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Council of Europe, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, as well as the Global Campus of Human Rights, a unique network of 100 universities around the world advancing human rights and democracy education.

Support also took place in more restrictive environments with continuing support to provide life-saving assistance to human rights defenders among others. Partnerships were concluded with civil society organisations to counter the shrinking civil space in Latin America, Asia, Africa, the Eastern Partnership and the Maghreb region, with a focus on youth participation and empowerment through digital means, and on women's and girl's empowerment. Actions have also been implemented to track the impact of COVID-19 and respond to the challenges it has created for global democracy – including support to independent media to ensure they can continue to operate, providing essential information on the pandemic.

Between 2014 and 2021 approximately 13 228 Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) at risk and their family members have been supported by direct emergency grants by Protect Defenders and the EU Emergency Fund. In 2021 alone, more than 4 445 HRDs and family members were supported.

Among key democracy support actions that continued during 2021 was the '**Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights**' a 'one-stop' online global monitoring platform (a 'tracker of trackers'), implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), with data and brief country analysis for 165 countries around the world.

The EU is also working closely with like-minded partners to support human rights and democracy. In December 2021, President von der Leyen represented the European Commission at the first Summit for Democracy hosted by the President of the United States, Joe Biden. President von der Leyen announced the new Global Europe Human Rights and Democracy programme, mentioned above. An ambitious global Team Europe Democracy initiative was also launched, providing a platform to better coordinate actions between EU Member States, and enhance our support to the rule of law, accountability and good governance projects in partner countries.

The implementation of the NDICI-Global Europe programmes and their programming on human rights and democracy is now well under way. The vast majority of partner countries will have major initiatives promoting human rights and the rule of law and addressing democratic governance. They will also benefit from a range of new global initiatives on issues such as political participation and independent media. In addition, the Delegated Act supplementing NDICI-Global Europe provides a

thematic target for the geographic programmes of at least 15 % for human rights, democracy and good governance.

In 2021, the EU used for the first time the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime it had adopted in December 2020. Sanctions were issued against individuals and entities from China, Eritrea, Libya, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia and South Sudan, who are responsible for serious human rights violations and abuses, ranging from torture, extrajudicial executions and killings to enforced disappearance of persons, arbitrary arrests or detentions and the systematic use of forced labour.

2. Delivering on our commitments: Promoting EU values and interests and fostering sustainable development globally

2.1. Implementing the 2030 Agenda and other international and European commitments and policies (including Global Gateway)

The EU has highlighted that the severe economic crisis brought about by the pandemic is affecting the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and that the global recovery must be green, digital, inclusive, just, and sustainable, as well as geared towards the SDGs (e.g., through the Joint Communication on multilateralism¹²). The EU's commitment to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs has even greater relevance by providing an impetus to 'building back better' after the pandemic towards a more inclusive, sustainable, just and resilient future for all, based on the 2030 Agenda that leaves no one behind. The EU has reiterated its strong commitment to implement the SDGs: 'our action will remain guided by the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs both internally and externally'.

In 2021, the EU relaunched the European Semester as an instrument refocusing on the SDGs and integrated the SDGs in the revision of Better Regulation¹³. The latter implies that all Commission services should identify and assess the contribution to relevant SDGs in all impact assessments, legislative proposals and evaluations.

Actions to simultaneously pursue EU global priorities and the SDGs have been taken further in a number of areas, including the recent revision of the Global Europe Results Framework (GERF), the Global Europe instrument adopted in June 2021, the programming guidelines and all the multiannual indicative programmes, each of which refers to the relevant SDGs under each priority area.

The EU continued to highlight the link between its main priorities and its commitment to implement the SDGs in its major milestones in 2021, such as the Communication on 'A renewed multilateralism'¹⁴ and the recent Joint Communication on Global Gateway¹⁵.

Earlier in 2021, the EU put forward a new strategy to strengthen the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism. The EU will use all of the tools at its disposal, including its extensive political, diplomatic and financial support, to promote global peace and security, defend human rights and international law, and to promote multilateral solutions to global challenges. To respond successfully to global crises, threats and challenges, the international community needs an efficient multilateral system, founded on universal rules and values and with the UN at the core of the multilateral system.

The Joint Communication on Global Gateway is the European Union's offer to partner countries to accelerate their twin transitions. It provides them with a sustainable plan to respond to their infrastructure needs and builds on the achievements of the 2018 EU-Asia Connectivity strategy. Global Gateway will focus on infrastructure that responds to various current challenges and be framed in the geopolitical context. It is anchored in five policy drivers: (1) digitalisation, (2) climate and energy, (3) transport, (4) health, and (5) education and research. As stated in the

¹² [JOIN\(2021\) 3 final of 17 February 2021](#).

¹³ [SWD\(2021\) 305 final of 3 November 2021](#).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 1 December 2021](#).

Communication, Global Gateway is fully aligned with the UN’s 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, consistent with the EU sustainability brand.

Figure 1: How the priorities of Global Gateway contribute to the SDGs.¹⁶



2.2. Means of implementation of the new agenda

A mix of financial and non-financial resources are required to implement the 2030 Agenda, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the EU supports a comprehensive and integrated approach to mobilising financing from all available sources to meet the SDGs and the EU has been further expanding its financial toolbox. This is enhanced by closer cooperation with ‘Team Europe’ partners which should lead to more complementarity, synergies, and multiplier effects, in line with the Council Conclusions on the European Financial Architecture for Development¹⁷.

The EU is helping partner countries make the most of the diverse financing sources available to support SDG implementation. In 2021, the EU has continued to support countries in their implementation of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). The EU worked with UN partners to develop INFF.org, a Knowledge Management Platform for the INFFs. 2021 also saw the creation of an EU-UNDP (United Nations Development programme) Technical Assistance Facility on INFFs. It offers technical expertise and country-level support to strengthen specific aspects of national INFF processes in partner countries, for instance in Indonesia and Senegal.

Other more specific EU achievements in 2021 include bringing together aid, trade, investment, domestic resource mobilisation and other policies designed to unlock the full potential of all financial flows.

¹⁶ In the figure, the SDGs are represented under a specific Commission political priority to which they are strongly associated, while noting that most SDGs contribute to varying degrees to several priorities.

¹⁷ [Council Conclusions 9462/1/21 of 10 June 2021.](#)

The EU adapted and further developed its financial instruments and aid modalities for investments outside the EU to deliver on its ambitious commitments to sustainable development and the implementation of the SDGs. The EU has continued supporting mobilisation of public and private investments for sustainable development in partner countries. Following the adoption of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation in June 2021¹⁸, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) started to be operationalised. Out of the total capacity of the EU External Action Guarantee (up to EUR 53.45 billion), nearly EUR 40 billion of guarantee cover is planned to be made available to reduce the risk of investment in partner countries and support their sustainable development. The EFSD+ is also a key instrument for the EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2021, a EUR 200 million EFSD+ guarantee (COVAX II) was signed with the European Investment Bank (EIB), increasing support for the COVAX Facility, which aims to secure fair and equitable access to safe COVID-19 vaccines for all.

The private sector is a major contributor to sustainable and inclusive growth and the creation of decent jobs and a key actor for the success of the SDGs. The EU has taken measures to promote local private sector development in partner countries, notably through entrepreneurship and access to finance support. Attractive investment climates and regulatory frameworks are also of paramount importance for the private sector and accordingly, the EU promotes public-private dialogue processes and events and has stepped up its assistance to investment climate reforms.

The EU is also facilitating the development of the total official support for sustainable development (TOSSD) statistical measure to help identify available means of implementation for the SDGs. In 2021, the first TOSSD dataset was published and, thanks to EU efforts, TOSSD was recognised by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) as a data source for SDG indicator 17.3.1.

2.3. Programming (NDICI-Global Europe, IPA III, INSC, DOAG)

Regarding the NDICI-Global Europe, with the exception of the Neighbourhood geographic programmes, the programming exercise was completed in December 2021 with the adoption by the College of 84 country, one multi-country, three regional, Erasmus+ and four thematic multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs). All adopted MIPs are published on the Commission website¹⁹.

For the Neighbourhood, the two foreseen regional MIPs and two country MIPs were adopted and are published on the Commission website²⁰. The remaining country MIPs will be proposed for adoption in the course of 2022 following progress on the extension and renewal of the joint documents with partner countries (Partnership Priorities, Association Agendas and equivalent). As the basis for programming, they will frame cooperation in the Neighbourhood and must be in place before related MIPs are proposed for adoption.

The adopted MIPs set out priority areas for cooperation with partner countries and regions around the world for 2021-2027. The MIPs also include the financial allocation for 2021-2024 (country level) and for 2021-2027 (regional and thematic level) that will support this cooperation. For Sub-Saharan

¹⁸ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/global-europe-programming_en

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en

Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas and the Caribbean this represents a total of EUR 26.3 billion. For the Neighbourhood this represents a total of about EUR 4 billion for the adopted MIPs.

Country allocations and Neighbourhood regional allocations for 2025-2027 will be decided at the mid-term review.

The priorities have been defined in consultation with the relevant partners' authorities and through a real 'Team Europe' approach, together with EU Member States, the European development finance institutions, including EIB and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), as well as the European Parliament. Consultations were also held with civil society organisations, including women and youth organisations, local authorities, representatives from the private sector, the UN and other like-minded partners. The agreed priorities underpinned the implementation of the EU's Global Gateway strategy and are in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs and the Paris Agreement. For fragile contexts, the MIPs adopt a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach where possible. For the Neighbourhood, the MIPs integrate the priorities laid out in the two key policy documents, which frame cooperation in the regions, namely the renewed Eastern Partnership and the new Agenda for the Mediterranean and their accompanying economic and investment plans.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas and the Caribbean countries and regions, the MIPs will deliver on the overarching EU policy objectives: Green deal features in all MIPs; Digital agenda features in over 80 % of the MIPs; Sustainable growth and decent jobs features in around 75 %; Migration is covered by almost 60 %; Governance, peace and security features in nearly 90 %; Social inclusion and human development are covered in 95 %; with Education addressed in 80 % of MIPs; while gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting priorities in all MIPs.

All the country and regional MIPs are complemented by four thematic MIPs: Human rights and democracy (EUR 1.5 billion); Civil society organisations (EUR 1.5 billion); Peace, stability and conflict prevention (EUR 871 million); and Global challenges (EUR 3.6 billion). Finally, the Erasmus+ MIP, financed by the geographic pillar, was adopted earlier in summer 2021 and it is co-financed by IPA III.

Regarding the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III), in December 2021 the Commission adopted the IPA III programming framework, an overarching strategic programming document for the use of EU pre-accession funds in 2021-2027. It replaces the previous country-specific programming documents. Under IPA III, programming of assistance is based on thematic priorities under five Windows, rather than pre-defined country envelopes. The IPA III programming framework is published on the Commission website²¹.

Regarding the European Union Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (EU-INSC), the MIP 2021-2027 was also adopted in 2021.

Regarding the Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG)²², priority areas for cooperation were jointly established with the Overseas countries and territories (OCTs) based on the

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance_en

²² [Council Decision \(EU\) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021](#) on the association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland).

overarching Commission policy priorities, notably Green Deal, Digital and Sustainable Growth and jobs and the OCTs' own priorities. In 2021, one regional MIP for Pacific OCTs was adopted together with ten territorial MIPs.

2.4. Working better together with Member States and European Financial Institutions – A 'Team Europe' approach

In line with the EU and its Member States' long-standing commitment to 'working better together', European leaders responded to the COVID-19 pandemic²³ with a package amounting to EUR 53.7 billion (committed up to the end of 2021) as a sign of unity and global solidarity with its partner countries. This collective response – including European development financing institutions and implementing agencies – to add new funds, redirect resources, ensure coordination and improve delivery was branded a 'Team Europe'²⁴ approach. It is designed to support partner countries in their path to a sustainable recovery aligned with the SDGs.

The Council Conclusions of 23 April 2021²⁵ on Team Europe highlighted the importance of the Team Europe approach beyond the COVID-19 response and added it to the EU External Toolbox. They granted a central role to Team Europe initiatives (TEIs), flagship projects of the Team Europe approach, around which European funding instruments and modalities coalesce to bring a transformational impact and take the Team Europe approach to the next level.

In 2021, while continuing to implement the Team Europe COVID-19 response package, the EU and Member States focused on promoting a green, digital, resilient and just global recovery linking grants and investments to the SDGs. The COVID-19 recovery and Working Better Together were fully embedded in NDICI-Global Europe multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs). As part of this programming exercise, the EU and its Member States (together with the EIB and ERBD) jointly identified 150 TEIs: 126 national, 23 regional and one thematic TEI on Democracy.

TEIs have already shown a qualitative improvement in how European actors on the ground are joining-up in a 'Team Europe' approach and improving partner countries' understanding of European values and the impact of cooperation. Designing TEIs has improved coordination between the EU and its Member States to enable a more action-oriented approach, including for gender mainstreaming and targeted action in line with the Gender Action Plan III.

The NDICI-Global Europe Regulation²⁶ and the Team Europe Council Conclusions promote the increased use of joint programming as the preferred approach to country programming, whenever possible. Good progress was recorded on Joint Implementation, which helped to increase the impact of EU funds. By December 2021, there were 14 joint programming documents in place globally. Intensified efforts to reach the same level of commitment in preparation for future joint programming are under way in another 19 partner countries. During 2021, joint programming

²³ [EU global response to COVID-19 \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

²⁴ Team Europe refers to the cooperation between the EU, its Member States and their diplomatic network, finance institutions and implementing organisations, as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

²⁵ [Council Conclusions 7894/21 of 23 April 2021.](#)

²⁶ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

documents, including strategies, were launched in Cambodia, Djibouti, Ecuador, Ghana, Laos, Palestine²⁷ and Togo.

In addition, a ‘Team Europe’ approach is now also used in supporting the implementation of the Global Gateway – the EU strategy that will leverage investments to boost sustainable links around the world by defining a new model for strategic engagement across the EU and its Member States and the private sector. In the Council Conclusions from 10 June 2021 on enhancing the European Financial Architecture for Development (EFAD)²⁸, EU Member States underlined the importance of policy steer and the need for enhanced coordination amongst the different financial institutions and other development actors to ‘deliver as one’ for greater efficiency and transformational development impact.

The EU and its Member States also created a vaccine-sharing mechanism which has delivered already over 255 million doses to partner countries up to the end of 2021.

2.5. Mobilisation of the NDICI-Global Europe cushion

The Commission made full use of Global Europe’s emerging challenges and priorities cushion budget of almost EUR 1 408 million for 2021.

Support to partner countries in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic has been the main driver of mobilisations. A EUR 400 million contribution to the COVAX Facility from the cushion contributed to doubling the EU’s support to this facility, which ensures vaccines reach lower income countries. In the same vein, an additional EUR 450 million was mobilised to support President von der Leyen’s State of the Union pledge²⁹ to support the provision of vaccines, enhance country absorption capacity and cover other needs of the COVID-19 response, namely diagnostics, health systems and therapeutics.

The use of the cushion has also supported the EU response to challenges related to migration and forced displacement. Following the European Council conclusions of June 2021, the Commission has proposed a package for 2021-2023 to continue supporting Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. As part of this package, in 2021, EUR 370 million was mobilised from the cushion to complement the funding for continuing to ensure key interventions in the sector of education for Syrian refugees in Turkey. Similarly, EUR 20 million was mobilised for migration-related actions in North Africa in order to ensure the continuity of ongoing activities.

Lastly, EUR 168 million was mobilised to reinforce the Global Challenges programme, as part of the top-ups embedded in recital 70 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation³⁰.

2.6. Policy Coherence for Development

The Commission continued to strengthen policy coherence for development (PCD) in accordance with Article 208 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which requires the EU and

²⁷ This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.

²⁸ [Council Conclusions 9462/1/21 of 10 June 2021](#).

²⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_21_4701

³⁰ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

its Member States to take account of the objectives of development cooperation in all its policies which are likely to affect developing countries.

In April 2021 the Commission adopted the Communication ‘Better regulation: Joining forces to make better laws’³¹, which contains an explicit commitment ‘to better consider the external implications of internal policies and their significant impacts on third countries’, including better consideration of its actors. This commitment became operational in November 2021 with the release of the revised Better Regulation Guidelines³². They require impact assessments to analyse, when relevant, the specific impacts of internal EU policies on third countries and to identify how EU actions contribute to the SDGs. There is a growing consideration for the external dimension in EU legislation, not least fostered through the implementation of the SDGs, which provide an explicit bridge between EU internal and external actions.

In view of the pivotal role of EU delegations in monitoring impacts of EU policies in partner countries, reporting from EU delegations on PCD issues was further reinforced. This is now a specific section in the annual progress reports and external experts support the analysis. Over the years, the number of reports is increasing, covering over 130 partner countries in 2021.

2.7. Development effectiveness

The EU actively promotes the effectiveness of its development cooperation to achieve the best, fastest and most sustainable impact for those most in need. The commitment of the EU and its Member States to applying the Busan principles of effectiveness (country ownership, results, inclusiveness, and transparency) is explicit in the European Consensus on Development and in the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation³³. The EU works with Member States on the implementation of these principles, promoting common positions and practices on effectiveness in support of the 2030 Agenda. The impact of the pandemic in reversing many development gains and increasing poverty and inequality means that effectiveness is more important than ever.

EU cooperation modalities operationalise the effectiveness principles, through capacity building, policy reform and political dialogue. Budget support is a key modality for the EU, providing core support to partner countries national systems and public expenditure programmes.

The EU actively uses its role as a member and supporter of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), where it represents European development providers on the GPEDC steering committee, to get the buy-in of all development actors at partner country level, including non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) donors, to build coordinated and more effective development cooperation partnerships.

The EU leads on the GPEDC Action Area on Demonstrating the Impact of Effectiveness and, in this role, has initiated a major research project to showcase how effectiveness delivers better impact and promotes country level initiatives to strengthen the effectiveness and impact of development management processes in individual sectors in partner countries. Throughout the year, the EU has

³¹ [COM\(2021\) 219 final of 29 April 2021](#).

³² [SWD\(2021\) 305 final of 3 November 2021](#).

³³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

supported the reform of the global effectiveness monitoring system and a review of the operating model and governance of the GPEDC. The EU has also promoted a renewed focus on effectiveness at the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) to help DAC members to strengthen the effectiveness of their programmes. As a result, the DAC is currently developing a modernised DAC narrative on effectiveness, which will lay out the DAC understanding of its commitments on effectiveness and how DAC members can help deliver this in partner countries.

In addition to the EU's work to build global consensus on development effectiveness, it also pursues greater effectiveness in its own development cooperation and that of EU Member States, through the 'Team Europe' approach and joint programming initiatives. Team Europe initiatives (TEIs) both benefit from and contribute to effectiveness. Greater effectiveness in sectors that TEIs focus on create the conditions for faster and better impact. The EU ensures, through the design processes of the TEIs, that opportunities to strengthen effectiveness are built into the initiatives.

3. Thematic Overview

Working together towards the SDGs and results achieved with EU support

The priorities of the current Commission have been translated into development actions: human development; green deal; sustainable growth and jobs; science, technology, innovation and digitalisation; migration; and governance, peace and security. They provide the basic structure for the sections within this chapter on the thematic overview of international partnerships. At the same time, implementing these EU priorities is key to help our partners to implement the SDGs. In this report, main achievements of the EU's actions are presented within the above-mentioned EU global priorities, alongside illustrative trends in relation to respective associated SDGs and the respective available results, based on the existing EU results framework. While for the purpose of this chapter, for readability purposes, each SDG is mentioned only once under an EU priority to which it is particularly related, the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs and the strong interlinkages among them imply that the content reported under each SDG will often also be relevant to other EU priorities as well.

The EU's partnerships are based on dialogues aiming to converge EU political priorities and the specific objectives of each partner country, with the SDGs as a central reference. Further to the collective commitment of the EU and its Member States in the European Consensus on Development to work together in partner countries, the key areas for working together towards the SDGs are joint programming, the joint results frameworks and joint implementation. This approach to development cooperation and international partnerships has been taken further in the COVID-19 response both at multilateral level and in partner countries, through the 'Team Europe' approach as a key element of the collective EU contribution to a global sustainable recovery aligned with the SDGs.

3.1. Human Development

Main achievements

Health

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt societies in multiple ways and those that have been most affected are those already deprived, leading to increasing inequalities. The EU strengthened and adapted its collaboration with global health, education and gender equality initiatives to ensure rapid adaptation of their support alongside a reorientation of EU country support to help partner countries face COVID-19's impact on human development.

To enable global access to COVID-19 vaccines, the Commission supported the COVAX Facility with EUR 300 million in grant contributions and EUR 200 million in EFSD Guarantees to allow COVAX to enter into Advance Purchase Commitments for delivery of vaccines to 92 of the poorest countries. The Commission also contributed EUR 397 million to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria allowing the Global Fund to finance life-saving interventions to limit the damage of the pandemic on these killer diseases. The EU also continued its leading support to GAVI's core work of building immunisations systems, having pledged EUR 300 million to GAVI for the 2021-2025 period, marking a 50 % increase in the Commission's commitment compared to the previous period.

In May 2021, the Commission President announced a Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa with support of more than EUR 1 billion from the EU budget and the European development finance institutions such as the European

Investment Bank (EIB). This amount will be further enhanced by contributions from EU Member States.

The Commission has engaged with key countries, the pharmaceutical industry, and counterparts at regional (African Union (AU), Africa Centres for Disease Control and prevention (Africa CDC) to support vaccination including in humanitarian contexts, and the Africa Medicines Agency) and global level (WHO) on the implementation of this initiative.

Education and skills

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt education for children and youth, particularly affecting marginalised populations and particularly those that do not have access to digital means to benefit from online education. The EU strengthened and adapted its collaboration with global education initiatives and actors to ensure rapid response grants to help countries ensure continued learning – including for children affected by conflicts and protracted crises. Ongoing EU country programmes were reoriented, where possible, for a quick and safe reopening of schools, to catch-up on lost learning and to continue strengthening education systems to provide quality education for every boy and girl.

Inequalities

To contribute to the achievement of SDG 10 and to fight inequalities by building inclusive and sustainable societies, the European Commission continued to put inequalities at the heart of the EU's international cooperation and developed specific tools to mainstream inequality-reduction as a cross-cutting objective of all interventions.

In September 2021, the Commission published the three-volume reference document 'Addressing income inequalities through development cooperation' to provide guidance and support to Commission services to mainstream inequalities-reduction in cooperation with partner countries. The reference document supports the ongoing effort of the EU to strengthen its approach to development cooperation to address inequalities in its partner countries. It has so far contributed to the successful integration of inequalities in regional and country MIPs.

The Commission also began developing an innovative Inequality Marker to fully track and report on efforts to fight inequalities, creating a sound reporting and benchmarking system on the contribution of EU development policy to the fight against inequalities

These tools are being translated into meaningful interventions, the result of strong partnerships and synergies with Member States. The EU and its Members States are designing Team Europe 'Equality Flagship' initiatives in countries where inequality is a significant challenge, a political priority and where there is the political will. These initiatives will be transformational and key contributions to reducing inequality and promoting good governance in partner countries. Moreover, in March 2021, the European Commission and Agence Française de Développement (AFD) [announced](#) the Extension of the EU-AFD Research Facility on Inequalities to support the implementation of research results in pilot public policies to reduce inequalities in four middle-income countries: South Africa, Mexico, Colombia and Indonesia.

Gender Equality

In 2021 the Implementation of the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) started translating into actions to make gender equality and empowerment of women and girls a priority in all EU external action.

Gender equality was well integrated in the geographic programming and in its international partnerships policy.

The EU committed that at least 85 % of all new external actions will have gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as a significant or principal objective by 2025. After one year of GAP III implementation, for the EU external actions this score is at 70 %³⁴. Corresponding commitments are at EUR 9 263 million. Four per cent of actions committed in 2021 have gender equality as their principal objective. See more details in annex 6.10 of this report.

Youth and Culture

Considering the impact that the pandemic has had on young people and whose futures are being jeopardised, the EU enhanced youth engagement in recovery efforts. Youth Sounding Boards were put in place at both global level and in several partner countries (such as Zimbabwe and Nigeria) to give young people a voice on EU policies and action. Young people could also share their views on and contribute to discussions on initiatives by participating in Youth Policy Labs (in the Western Balkans for instance). Preparations and consultations started on a new EU action plan for youth participation and empowerment in external actions, to ensure that policies and actions are relevant for future generations and allow young people to help shape the future.

During the pandemic and lock-down periods, culture has played an important role in keeping societies together, notably through digital means. EU actions for culture and creative sectors contributed to recovery efforts in several ways and with a particular focus on young people to enhance access to financing, building skills for jobs and to ensure respect of human rights and cultural diversity.

SDG #1 Reduced Poverty

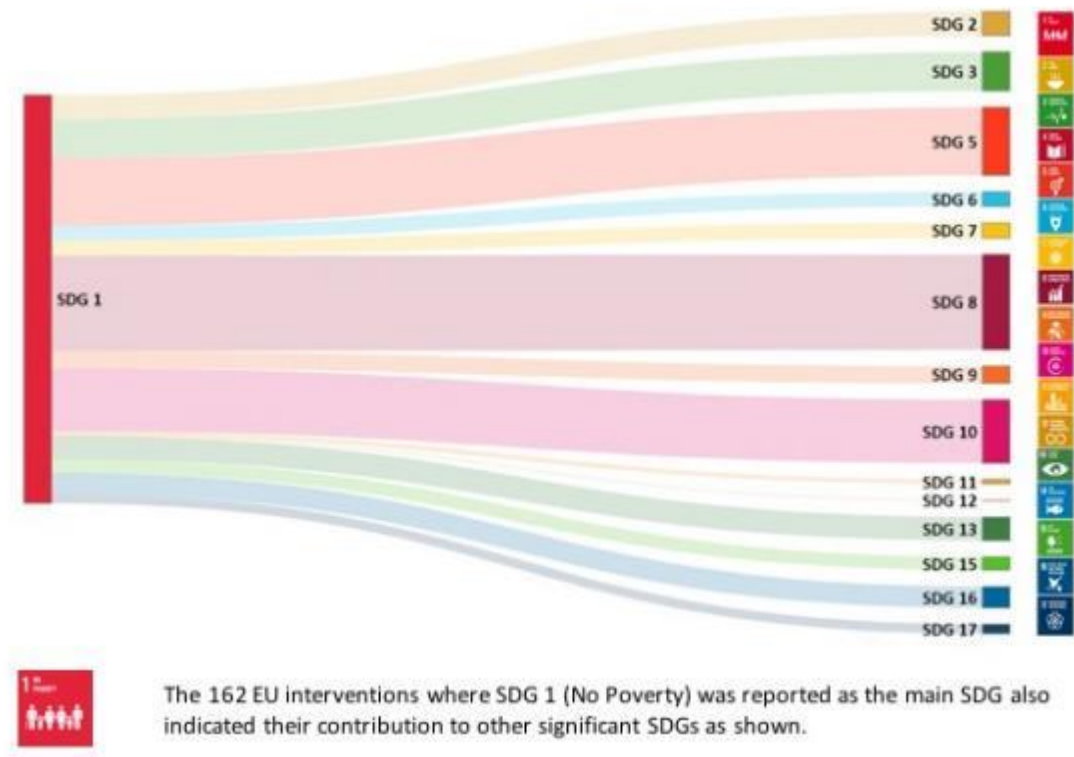
For almost 25 years, poverty has steadily declined, and the poverty rate halved in our partner countries on average. EU cooperation has helped achieve this result, but the quest to end poverty has suffered a setback with COVID-19.

The pandemic crisis is having particularly devastating consequences for the most vulnerable people, resulting in an unprecedented increase in global poverty. The World Bank estimates that over 100 million people have been pushed into extreme poverty and around 118 million more people have faced chronic hunger, making the economic and social consequences of COVID-19 more serious than the virus itself.

The EU's international partnerships interventions all pursue the primary objective of poverty eradication. Yet, achieving this objective requires united action across all fronts. This is why the EU and its Member States, acting in a 'Team Europe' approach, are working to support a sustainable recovery and to achieve all SDGs. In this context, given the multidimensional dimension of poverty, EU actions aiming at poverty eradication contribute actively to the pursuit of a range of SDGs (see Figure 2).

³⁴ The EU is following the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker methodology to monitor annually its commitments in actions and funding to gender equality in external action, for both ODA and non-ODA funds. This calculation covers the following external financing instruments: NDICI, IPA III and CFSP.

Figure 2: SDG 1 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



In 2021, our official development assistance (ODA) commitments towards our partner countries to achieve SDG 1 (No Poverty) are estimated to be around EUR 3.5 billion (i.e., when intervention had SDG 1 as a first and second main objective). This helped alleviate the consequences of the pandemic in partner countries, and in particular for vulnerable groups. Social protection, through its redistributive nature, proved to be a powerful instrument to mitigate increasing levels of inequalities and poverty when aligned to partner countries’ policies. In 2021, the EU has continued its support for building comprehensive and resilient social protection systems in partner countries. Humanitarian assistance contributed to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

SDG #3 Good Health and Well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt societies in multiple ways and those that have been most affected are those already deprived, leading to increasing inequalities.

The EU strengthened and adapted its collaboration with global health, education and gender equality initiatives to ensure rapid adaptation of their support alongside a reorientation of EU country support to help partner countries face COVID-19’s impact on human development. EU actions to contribute to good health and well-being are often directly associated not only to the pursuit of SDG3 but also to a broader range of SDGs, given the interlinkages between SDGs (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: SDG 3 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



To enable global access to COVID-19 vaccines, the Commission supported the COVAX Facility with EUR 300 million in grant contributions and EUR 200 million in EFSD Guarantees to EIB loans, allowing COVAX to enter into Advance Purchase Commitments, for the procurement and delivery of vaccines to the 92 poorest countries. Additional support of EUR 10 million was provided to the COVAX humanitarian buffer. The Commission has also committed EUR 100 million to support vaccine deployment and rollout in Africa from its humanitarian budget. Through a ‘Team Europe’ approach, around EUR 656 million in humanitarian support was provided by Commission services, of which EUR 203 million in 2021 was to vulnerable populations affected by the pandemic. The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge and the Union Civil Protection Mechanism have facilitated the delivery of humanitarian aid and the overall response to the pandemic.

The Commission also contributed EUR 397 million to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and allowed the Global Fund to finance interventions to limit the damage of the pandemic on these three diseases. In May 2021, the Commission President announced a Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa with the support of more than EUR 1 billion from the EU budget and the European development finance institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB). This amount will be further enhanced by contributions from EU Member States. The Commission has engaged with key countries, the pharmaceutical industry, and counterparts at regional (AU, Africa CDC, Africa Medicines Agency) and global level (WHO) for implementation.

SDG #4 Quality Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has wiped-out years of educational progress as many children continued being deprived of education due to lock-downs, which exacerbated further existing vulnerabilities.

Job loss and family income reduction have pushed a number of children into work during school closure, they are risk of child labour and dropping out schooling if no social security measures are put in place. As economies were increasingly put under stress, two-thirds of countries reduced their education budgets thereby increasing existing global education financing gaps.

The EU advocated for sustainable funding for education, supported global reform efforts to ensure better collaboration amongst education actors and the channelling of support in more coordinated and efficient ways. The EU joined evidence-based advocacy efforts at two Global Education Meetings to promote the right to quality education.

Given the importance of education for human development, the Commission decided to increase its support from around 7 % to at least 10 % of development programmes managed by DG INTPA under NDICI-Global Europe and the Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG)³⁵ funding with a focus on the countries that are furthest behind the sustainable development education goals. The EU contribution to the Global Partnership for Education was increased by nearly 50 % for 2021-2027 to EUR 700 million helping 175 million boys and girls to learn and get a further 88 million children in school and prevent children being out of school and socially excluded.

The Erasmus+ programme was stepped up to contribute to recovery efforts and to strengthen higher education institutions and systems in partner countries. The budget for Sub-Saharan Africa was multiplied by 3.5 times for 2021-2027 and the first calls for applications were launched to provide young people with opportunities to study at European universities and enhance prospects of employment. Furthermore, the EU endorsed the G7 Ministerial Declaration on girls' education in May 2021, committing to ensure by 2026 that 40 million more girls will be in school, and 20 million more girls will be able to read in low and lower-middle income countries. The EU also remains a strong advocate for the Safe Schools Declaration.

The EU continued its strong leadership in education in emergencies, dedicating 10 % of EU humanitarian aid to restore and maintain access to safe, quality and inclusive primary and secondary education during humanitarian crises. The EU supported over 2.3 million children to quickly enter or return to learning opportunities.

SDG #5 Gender Equality

In 2021 the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III - An ambitious Agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action³⁶, adopted by the College on 25 November 2020, went at full speed with bold political and operational engagements at country, regional and international levels. With the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) also starting, the focus was put on integrating GAP III priorities and objectives in the geographic programming, paving the way for gender mainstreaming in all sectors including new thematic areas such as green and digital transitions and blended finance. A GAP III 'country-level implementation plan' was developed in each country by the EU Delegation in cooperation with EU Member States, identifying political objectives and concrete programmes through broad-based consultations with all

³⁵ [Council Decision \(EU\) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021](#) on the association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland).

³⁶ [JOIN\(2020\) 17 final of 25 November 2020](#).

stakeholders, cementing greater EU cooperation and joint initiatives. Several Team Europe initiatives include specific actions supporting gender equality results. Specific resources and accountability measures, including indicators, contribute to SDG 5.

The EU committed that at least 85 % of all new external actions will have gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as a significant or principal objective by 2025. After one year of GAP III implementation, for the EU external actions this score is at 70 %³⁷. Corresponding commitments are at EUR 9 263 million. Four per cent of actions committed in 2021 have gender equality as their principal objective. For more details, see annex 6.10 of this report.

GAP III calls to implement at least one programme dedicated to gender equality in each country and region by 2025. Numerous ambitious initiatives were already identified, mixing different support modalities such as projects, budget support, and blended finance. There has been a swift uptake of the new priorities on green transition and digital transformation while furthering support for the elimination of gender-based violence, economic and social empowerment, participation and leadership, a stronghold of EU support to partner countries for many years.

Dialogue and cooperation with governments, the private sector and civil society were reinforced at all levels. In 2021 funding to women's rights organisations and movements increased by 27.7 % compared to 2020. The Commission continued to drive the international agenda and agreements toward fulfilling gender equality and women's empowerment, advancing the promotion of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, notably as one of the co-leaders of the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence of the Generation Equality Forum, and foregrounding the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative. The Council Conclusions on Afghanistan in 2021³⁸ refer to respect for women's and girls' rights as one of the benchmarks for engagement with the de facto authorities. As such, the EU's support to the basic needs of the Afghan people pays special attention to the rights of women and girls.

Actions are in place to systematically implement the WPS agenda including, for example, specific support to women mediators, integrating gender perspectives in the prevention of violent extremism and increasing and strengthening the participation of women in Common Security and Defence Policy operations and missions.

Humanitarian objectives were met in both policy, funding and advocacy. The EU continued to engage as an active member of the new Call to Action on Gender-Based Violence.

In line with the EU commitment to 'lead by example', a set of initiatives were taken to set in place a gender-responsive leadership, while internal capacity was reinforced through extensive training, guidance, and a refreshed network of gender focal persons, equality coordinators, and gender advisors. The new GAP III reporting system is operational and the Strategic and institutional objectives and indicators³⁹ were monitored (see annex 6.10), showing overall good progress. Solid foundations for the implementation of GAP III are in place.

³⁷ The EU is following the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker methodology to monitor annually its commitments in actions and funding to gender equality in external action, for both ODA and non-ODA funds. This calculation covers the following external financing instruments: NDICI, IPA III and CFSP.

³⁸ [Council Conclusions 11713/2/21 of 15 September 2021](#).

³⁹ [SWD\(2020\) 284 final of 25 November 2020](#).

SDG #6 Clean Water and Sanitation

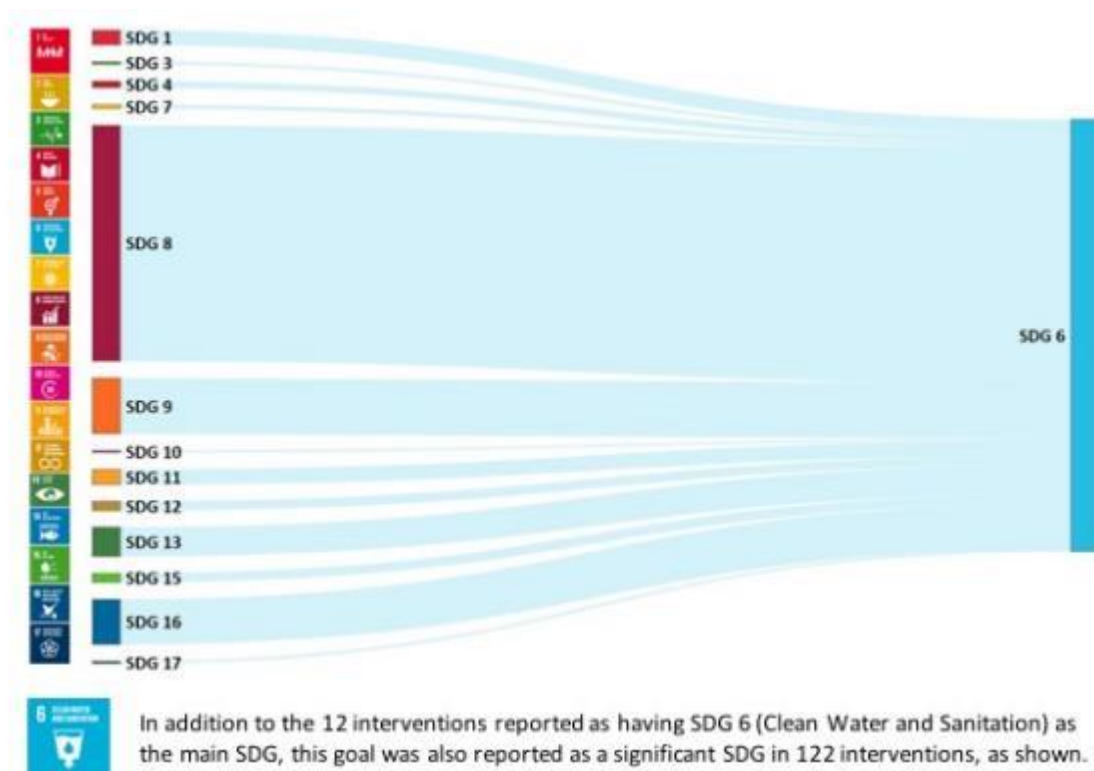
The world is currently off-track to meeting the targets of SDG 6. There were still two billion people in the world lacking safely managed drinking water services in 2020, while almost half of the global population – 3.6 billion people – lack safe sanitation. The EU continued to support access to water and sanitation as well as sustainable and integrated water management. Achieving progress in this area is also critical for many other sectors including biodiversity, climate change, disaster risk reduction, nutrition, gender, health, and education.

In the area of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the Council Conclusions on water in EU external action⁴⁰ were adopted in November 2021. Transboundary water cooperation is vital to prevent conflicts and ensure effective and sustainable use and management of shared resources. However, cooperation in many water basins is inadequate to tackle the existing problems and challenges, including weak legal and/or institutional frameworks, insufficient implementation of joint policies and low capacity. Team Europe initiatives on water and food security and water management in the Southern Neighbourhood, on transboundary water management for Africa, and on water, energy and climate in Central Asia were developed in this context. In parallel to this dynamic, continued support to the globalisation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Water Convention was put in place. 2021 was also the first implementation year of Climate Investor 2, a programme that actively developed its pipeline with the private sector in the areas of water access in rural areas, innovative sanitation solutions and non-revenue water. Significant progress has been made in the adoption of a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, increasing coherence across the WASH sectors.

EU actions directly associated to a range of SDGs contribute to the pursuit of SDG 6, given the interlinkages between SDGs (see Figure 4).

⁴⁰ [Council Conclusions 14108/21 of 19 November 2021](#).

Figure 4: SDG 6 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



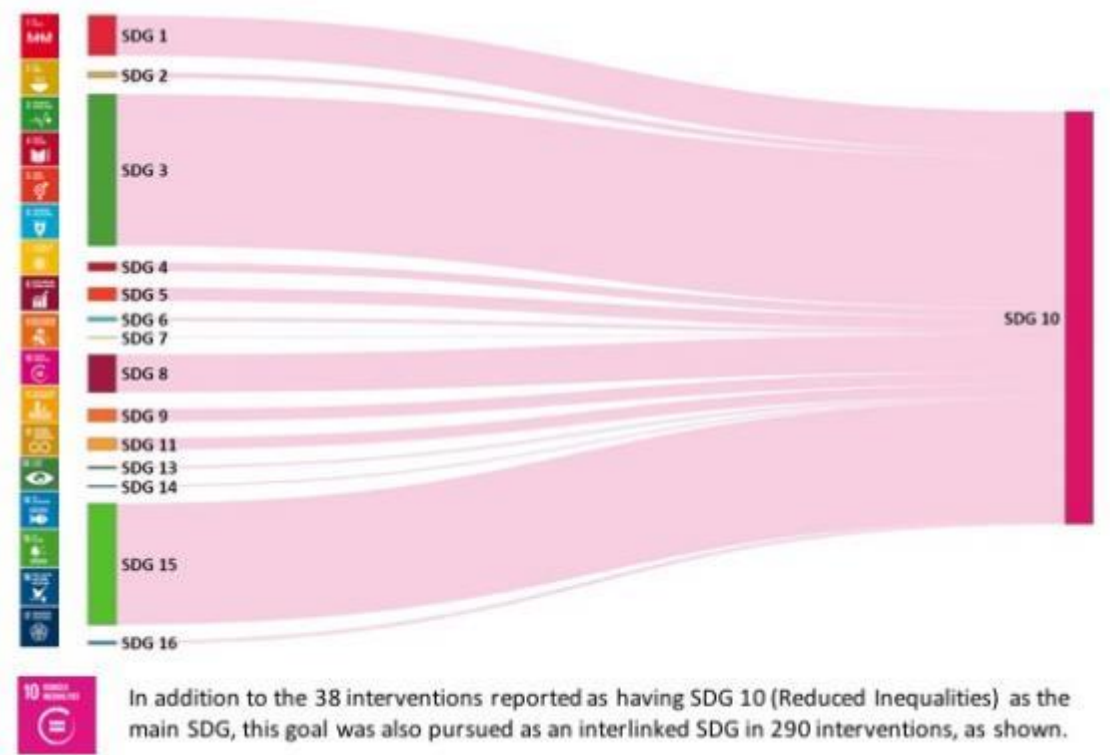
SDG #10 Reduced Inequalities

To contribute to the achievement of SDG 10 and to fight inequalities by building inclusive and sustainable societies, the European Commission continued to put inequalities at the heart of the EU’s international cooperation and developed specific tools to mainstream inequality-reduction as a cross-cutting objective of all interventions. In 2021, while inequality-reduction was mainstreamed across all interventions, the EU continued to support specific policy measures targeting people living in the poorest and most vulnerable situations. These interventions focused on sectors considered to have significant impact in reducing inequalities across different dimensions in partner countries, and built on the work the EU is carrying forward across all priorities. This year the Commission published the reference document *Addressing income inequalities through development cooperation*⁴¹ to provide guidance and support to Commission services to mainstream inequalities-reduction in our cooperation with partner countries. The reference document has so far contributed to the successful integration of inequalities in regional and country MIPs. The Commission also began developing an innovative Inequality Marker to fully track our efforts to fight inequalities, creating a sound reporting and benchmarking system on the contribution of EU development policy to the fight against inequalities.

⁴¹ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, *Addressing income inequalities through development cooperation. Volume 1, Concepts and definitions*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2841/313004>

EU actions to reduce inequalities are often directly associated to the pursuit of a range of SDGs, given the interlinkages between these SDGs (see Figure 5). Reducing inequalities depends on progress in a broader range of SDGs, and in turn has a clear impact on many of the other SDGs.

Figure 5: SDG 10 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a working method to reach people in vulnerable situations and to leave no one behind. In June 2021 the Commission adopted the staff working document ‘Applying the Human Rights Based Approach to international partnerships: An updated Toolbox for placing rights-holders at the centre of EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation’⁴². The toolbox and its virtual version guide the development of interventions step by step and provides a multitude of tools, resources and examples.

These tools are being translated into concrete interventions, the result of strong partnerships and synergies with like-minded Member States. The EU and its Members States are designing Team Europe ‘Equality Flagship’ initiatives in partner countries where inequality is a significant challenge and a political priority. These initiatives will be transformational and high-profile contributions to reducing inequality and promoting good governance in partner countries. In March 2021, the European Commission and AFD [announced](#) the Extension of the EU-AFD Research Facility on Inequalities to support the implementation of research results in pilot public policies to reduce inequalities in four middle-income countries: South Africa, Mexico, Colombia and Indonesia.

⁴² [SWD\(2021\) 179 final of 30 June 2021](#).

Selected results 2018-2021⁴³

64 424 000 one-year-olds were fully immunised with EU support.

30 674 000 women of reproductive age had access to modern contraception methods with EU support.

38 072 000 students enrolled in primary education with EU support.

8 259 000 students enrolled in secondary education with EU support.

17 093 000 individuals had access to improved drinking water source and/or sanitation facility with EU support.

16 919 000 people benefitting from EU-funded interventions to counter sexual and gender-based violence.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁴⁴

- Students from 84 countries around the world have been enrolled in primary and secondary education with EU support. A large share of students received support via the Global Education Partnership, which is co-funded by the EU.
- The largest number of individuals with access to improved drinking water source and/or sanitation facility was reached in Sub-Saharan Africa (6.2 million), followed by North Africa (4.8 million) and South & Central Asia (2.2 million). The results are based on the people with access to newly built or rehabilitated water points and to newly constructed, rehabilitated or improved sanitation facilities with a view to eliminating open defecation in communities. In Afghanistan, 680 000 persons from urban and rural areas had access to improved drinking water.
- People in 46 countries were reached by interventions to counter sexual and gender-based violence. In Timor-Leste, the COVID-19 Emergency Response reached more than 59 000 persons (29 000 women and 30 000 men) through campaigns to prevent gender-based violence and informing about referral services available to survivors of domestic violence.

Table 1: EU RF indicators disaggregated by sex

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|--|------------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| Number of one-year-olds fully immunised with EU support | 64 424 000 | - | - | - |
| Number of women of reproductive age using modern contraception methods with EU support | 30 674 000 | 30 674 000 | - | - |
| Number of students enrolled in education with EU support: a) primary education | 38 072 000 | 17 733 000 | 19 048 000 | 1 291 000 |

⁴³ 2018-2021 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by INTPA and NEAR (ENI) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for EU RF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁴⁴ Selected results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

| | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Number of students enrolled in education with EU support: b) secondary education | 8 259 000 | 3 856 000 | 3 915 000 | 489 000 |
| Number of individuals with access to improved drinking water source and/or sanitation facility with EU support | 17 093 000 | 336 000 | 331 000 | 16 426 000 |
| Number of people benefitting from EU-funded interventions to counter sexual and gender-based violence | 16 919 000 | 6 188 000 | 6 553 000 | 4 178 000 |

3.2. Green Deal

Main achievements

In 2021, the European Commission continued to be at the forefront of international efforts to promote sustainable and inclusive development, in line with the external dimension of the European Green Deal launched in December 2019. Building on the transformative agenda of the Green Deal strategy in 2021 the Commission has stepped up its work to address climate change, preserve biodiversity and enhance the sustainability of food systems.

This proved to be all the more crucial as climate change, biodiversity loss, environment degradation and food insecurity worsened and the Green Deal was confirmed as Europe's blueprint for implementing a sustainable recovery model to 'build back better'. The strategy became even more vital as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to challenge global economies and the Commission's efforts to enter a path of green, just and resilient post-pandemic recovery in 2021.

As these challenges require joint efforts and integrated responses at national, regional and global level, the European Commission, through the 'Team Europe' approach, is joining forces with Member States and other partners to foster a green and inclusive transition. Between 2021 and 2027, the EU and its Member States, through a 'Team Europe' approach, will mobilise up to EUR 300 billion of investments in digital, climate and energy, transport, health, education and research. It will do so in the framework of its new Global Gateway strategy, launched in 2021, which is expected to bring a major contribution to the green and digital transition. Fully aligned with the UN's Agenda 2030 and its SDGs, the Global Gateway strategy will help tackle the most pressing global challenges, from fighting climate change, to improving health systems, and boosting competitiveness and security of global supply chains. In the area of green and smart cities, the Commission is seeking to strengthen linkages between EU cities and cities in partner countries including through initiatives such as the Global Covenant of Mayors.

In 2021, the Commission continued to promote the transition towards sustainable agriculture and nutrition and food security. The Sustainable Cocoa Initiative was advanced and eight thematic roundtables of the Cocoa Talks on the sustainability of the value chain were successfully held. To support sustainable agriculture the use of blended finance increased and several agri-blending initiatives were put in place to support smallholders.

In relation to the EU Farm to Fork strategy, the Commission enhanced its awareness and capacity-building activities in food sectors in partner countries (for example the AGRINFO and COLEACP programmes) to support and facilitate their transition.

In September the EU pledged EUR 140 million to support CGIAR, the largest international network on agricultural research for development, to support research in sustainable food systems to tackle

hunger, preserve natural resources and improve livelihoods. In the context of the Global Network against Food Crises, a new joint Food and Agriculture Organisation/ World Food programme (FAO/WFP) initiative worth EUR 21 million to follow-up the activities of the Network with a new focus on assessing the vulnerability of food systems at country level and related responses was operationalised. In 2021, the EU also substantially contributed to the success of the UN Food Systems and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summits.

In total, a Team Europe commitment amounting to EUR 4.3 billion was made, of which the EU pledged EUR 2.5 billion, for 2021-2024 (EUR 1.4 billion for development and EUR 1.1 billion for humanitarian aid) to address all forms of malnutrition in humanitarian and development settings.

2021 was also an important year for key steps made in tackling biodiversity loss through policy and the mainstreaming of biodiversity across all interventions. The Biodiversity COP15 in Kunming (Part 1) adopted a Declaration in line with EU's high ambition and position. For the NaturAfrica initiative, the identification process started in six regional landscapes and in several African countries with the aim of improving biodiversity conservation.

In parallel, the Commission adopted the deforestation regulation⁴⁵, forest partnerships were launched at COP26, and a EUR 1 billion contribution was made to the Global Forest Financing Pledge. To honour the pledge made by President von der Leyen in January in support of Africa's Great Green Wall, the Commission has started the development of country programmes.

Furthermore, the EU continued to support access to water and sanitation, through the adoption of the Council Conclusions on Water in EU external action⁴⁶ in the area of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). To promote sustainable and integrated water management, Team Europe initiatives on transboundary water management for Africa and on water, energy and climate in Central Asia were developed, as transboundary water cooperation is vital to prevent conflicts and ensure effective and sustainable use and management of shared resources. In parallel, continued support to the globalisation of the UNECE Water Convention was put in place.

In 2021, the Commission also adopted important policy documents such as the Zero pollution action plan⁴⁷ and the proposal for a revised waste shipment regulation⁴⁸.

The EU is committed to pursuing its international cooperation on sustainable consumption and production (SCP), including the circular economy. The EU has continued the implementation of SWITCH to Green, EU's flagship initiative on SCP and the circular economy, which includes the SWITCH to Circular Economy Value Chains project and the regional SWITCH programmes in Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean. In 2021, the EU also launched the global alliance on circular economy and resource efficiency (GACERE) in collaboration with the United Nations Environment programme (UNEP) and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) that aims to boost initiatives related to the circular economy transition, resource efficiency and SCP building on efforts already deployed internationally.

⁴⁵ [COM\(2021\) 706 final of 17 November 2021](#).

⁴⁶ [Council Conclusions 14108/21 of 19 November 2021](#).

⁴⁷ [COM\(2021\) 400 final of 12 May 2021](#).

⁴⁸ [COM\(2021\) 709 final of 17 November 2021](#).

Sustainable energy plays a key role in the external dimension of the Green Deal. The EU Partnership Instrument contributed to progress towards the achievement of SDG 7 by promoting policy cooperation especially with G20 partner countries, such as with India through the EU–India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership project and China through the EU-China Energy Cooperation Platform. Issues addressed included the development of renewable energy and necessary power market reforms, support to energy efficiency, and support to the global just energy transition. By the end of 2021, EU-supported sustainable energy activities in partner countries had contributed to the establishment of new renewable energy generation capacity of 18 gigawatts (GW) and to more than 22 million people gaining access to sustainable energy and energy services improving their livelihoods and boosting the socio-economic development of their communities. During 2021, EU cooperation with the African Union Commission made a crucial contribution to the development of the African Single Electricity Market proposal to establish an integrated continental electricity market that can benefit people and economies across Africa.

The climate dimensions of adaptation and mitigation were effectively integrated in programming at country and regional level for the period 2021-2027, including a EUR 400 million allocation specifically dedicated to climate and resilience in the regional programme for Sub-Saharan Africa. Specific actions contributing to the global green transition and to reducing methane emissions were adopted in 2021 and in the context of COP26 the EU pledged EUR 100 million to the Adaptation Fund (to be operationalised in 2022). In the course of 2021, the EU provided technical support for the upgrade of 14 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in view of the first round of updates of NDCs scheduled ahead of COP26 in collaboration with the NDC Partnership and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). A new technical assistance facility at a total cost of EUR 11 million was also set up to further assist partner countries in the implementation of their NDCs as well as National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

In the face of the increasingly apparent effects of climate change, the Commission adopted a new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change in February 2021⁴⁹. The new strategy has four principle objectives to make adaptation smarter, swifter and more systemic, and to step up international action on adaptation to climate change. To complement the EU's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement, the Commission drafted an EU Adaptation Communication which was adopted by the Council and submitted to the UNFCCC in October 2021.

In 2021, the Commission adopted the new European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (EINS) - a specific tool complementing the NDICI-Global Europe with a budget of EUR 300 million to promote nuclear safety worldwide. The completion of the last major project, the Interim Storage Facility II for the nuclear fuel of the Chernobyl nuclear power plants, marked the successful termination of international support to make Chernobyl environmentally safe again. All facilities, including the new safe confinement covering the destroyed reactor number 4, have been commissioned and officially handed over to Ukraine.

The urgent measures to secure the former uranium processing plant at Pridniprovs'kyi (450 km from Kyiv, Ukraine) and to prevent uncontrolled access to contaminated areas have been successfully put in place. EU-funded remediation works were launched in 2016 and will continue up to 2025.

⁴⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/adaptation-climate-change/eu-adaptation-strategy_en

The Environmental Remediation Account for Central Asia (ERA), an international fund largely funded by the Commission, successfully completed remediation works on two uranium mining sites in Kyrgyzstan. Works on the third and final contaminated site in Kyrgyzstan and on two other priority sites in Uzbekistan have been now launched.

Achievements of EINS and the previous Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) in 2021 also include the outstanding commitment and the results obtained in three projects targeting three different regions around the world – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Gulf Cooperation Council, and West Balkans - in the area of emergency preparedness and response, through the establishment of complex software systems which can help emergency managers to make decisions on public protection in case of a nuclear or radiological emergency.

In the area of humanitarian aid, the European Commission adopted a Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action: new challenges, same principles⁵⁰. The Communication includes the Commission's approach to addressing the humanitarian impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and to reducing the environmental impact of EU-funded humanitarian operations. In 2021, the Commission also dedicated EUR 75 million to disaster preparedness projects, including supporting communities to prepare for the impacts of climate change, and the Commission also aims to mainstream preparedness in all EU-funded humanitarian operations.

SDG #2 Zero Hunger

In 2021, the EU advanced the Sustainable Cocoa Initiative. Eight thematic roundtables of the Cocoa Talks were held, gathering stakeholders from the cocoa sector, the EU, and representatives of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Cameroon. Similar roundtables were organised in the three producing countries. The Cocoa Talks were very successful at engaging with stakeholders on the sustainability of the cocoa value chain including living incomes for farmers, standards, traceability in respect to child labour and deforestation, regulation with the focus on due diligence, and sustainable production of cocoa.

The use of blended finance in EU support to agriculture has accelerated in the past three years and several agri-blending initiatives are now in place to support smallholders. Further targeted support promoting access to finance was provided through two key projects in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries: a EUR 16.6 million programme strengthening the capacity of informal sector intermediaries, aggregators and government, and a EUR 7 million programme to support value-chain specific quality and regulatory infrastructure.

The EU pledge of EUR 270 million made at the One Planet Summit in Paris (2017) in support of the Development-Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture (DeSIRA) initiative was entirely contracted with about 80 interventions in Africa, Central and Latin America and Asia, forging strong synergies with the Global Climate Change Alliance+ under the Landscape for the Future initiative. The EU also pledged EUR 140 million in September 2021 to support CGIAR, the largest international network of agricultural research for development, to support research in sustainable food systems and to tackle hunger. The EU continued to develop its support to global Land Governance processes seeking to promote more transparent and equitable land tenure systems and to support the application of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure. The EU supported the work

⁵⁰ [COM\(2021\) 110 final of 10 March 2021](#).

under the G7 Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Compact, including through targeted support to food insecure countries.

The Global Network Against Food Crises, in which the EU is a leading actor, published the timely Global Report on Food Crises⁵¹ and its mid-year update together with other products. A commitment taken in the previous year was operationalised in a new joint FAO/WFP programme worth EUR 21 million for the follow-up on activities of the Global Network with an innovative focus on assessing the vulnerability of food systems at country level and related responses.

The EU and its Member States substantially contributed to the success of the UN Food Systems Summit (FSS) and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit. In partnership with FAO and Centre de coopération internationale en recherche (CIRAD), the EU launched Food Systems Assessments in over 50 countries worldwide that contribute to the follow-up to the FSS through national and subnational analyses and dialogue by reinforcing multi-stakeholder collaboration. Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen participated in the N4G Summit highlighting the essential role of nutrition for healthy and productive lives, and especially for women and children. A Team Europe commitment amounting to EUR 4.3 billion was made, of which the EU pledged EUR 2.5 billion for 2021-2024, to address all forms of malnutrition in humanitarian and development settings.

The EU continued outreach activities with partners to engage in dialogue on the Farm to Fork strategy on how it creates opportunities, not only in the EU, but also in third countries for making food systems fair, healthy and environmentally friendly.

SDG #7 Affordable and Clean Energy

Sustainable energy is crucial to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement's targets and has a key role in the external dimension of the European Green Deal. In 2021, the Commission continued to support actions in partner countries to increase sustainable energy access and decarbonise the energy sector by spurring renewable energy generation, energy efficiency solutions, and promoting the phasing out of polluting fuels.

Energy is among the EU's shared priorities with Africa and a key area of the Africa-EU Partnership. Based on the Council Conclusions on 'Climate and Energy Diplomacy - Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal'⁵², the Communication 'Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa'⁵³ and the second AU-EU Ministerial meeting, the Africa-EU Green Energy initiative (AEGEI) was developed in 2021, as part of the multi-sectoral African Investment Package and recently announced Global Gateway strategy. AEGEI will embody the geopolitical Commission's work in Africa in the energy sector.

In 2021, the EU supported African Union institutions in launching the Continental Transmission Network Masterplan for Africa and the African Single Electricity Market, a crucial step to enhance cooperation and enable the use of Africa's abundant renewable energy resources, while spurring trade and investment exchanges and closing gaps on energy infrastructure between regions and countries.

⁵¹ [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021 | World Food Programme \(wfp.org\)](#)

⁵² [Council Conclusions 5263/21 of 25 January 2021.](#)

⁵³ [JOIN\(2020\) 4 final of 9 March 2020.](#)

With the ambition of achieving progress on energy efficiency, in line with SDG 7, in 2021 the programme Demand side management, Social Infrastructures, Renewables and Energy Efficiency (DESIREE) with the EIB started its implementation phase. This programme foresees (among other focus areas) the development of solutions for the electrification of health facilities, a crucial aspect in times of global pandemic. In addition, in line with the ambition to support clean cooking, two new contracts were signed, with the Danish Investment Fund and with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), to support investments and strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the sector.

Through the strategic partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project, the EU continued to engage G20 countries on topics related to energy transition such as energy efficiency, energy technologies, energy poverty and just transition, with approximately 150 events delivered with about 15 000 participants, including approximately 3 000 officials targeted. The strategic direction for SPIPA was extended to reflect the emerging European Green Deal/Green Recovery narrative in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Transferability and Convertibility Facility with Proparco was also launched and additional funds were provided to the Kenya Electrifi Country Windows II and to Climate Investor One to facilitate the integration of renewable energy into the grid.

At the same time, two more actions started to promote the EU approach on energy security based on sustainable energy and energy savings. The first one 'EU leading the global energy transition' supports EU leadership of the global energy transition. Whereas the second one 'Towards a liquid, flexible and transparent global Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market' aims to contribute to the EU's Energy Union objectives, in particular on secure, sustainable, diverse and competitive gas supplies by supporting the establishment of a liquid, flexible and transparent global LNG market. Finally, in the frame of the annual action plan for Planet (NDICI-Global Europe Global Challenges), two specific actions were adopted to strengthen international diplomacy and dialogues, to provide in-depth analysis and to set up global knowledge, while supporting the just energy transition.

Throughout 2021, the Commission also developed minimum environmental requirements⁵⁴ for its humanitarian partners as part of its approach to reducing the environmental impact of humanitarian aid operations. The requirements prioritise, among other things, access to clean energy in humanitarian programmes.

SDG #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

Urbanisation and the role of cities in the economy are increasingly shaping development challenges and opportunities in developing countries, so much so that local authorities are increasingly recognised as key actors in achieving most of the SDGs. With cities globally contributing 80 % of GDP, 70 % of global energy consumption and 70 % of global carbon emissions and nearly one billion people living in slums, achieving the SDG 11 targets represents a major challenge.

In 2021, the programming under the new multiannual financial framework (2021-2027) saw a significant increase in countries where EU support will target urban development with a view to advance the achievement of wider strategic objectives such as green transition and achievement of the SDGs. The Commission has put in place tools for supporting urban development through various

⁵⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment_en

channels, including through blending and guarantees for the mobilisation of finance and support to investments in sustainable urban development.

Extensive informal settlements continue to be a critical factor for persisting poverty and exclusion. Through the Participatory Slum Upgrading programme (PSUP), the Commission in a joint effort with the ACP countries and the UN addresses the growth of slum dwellers and the challenges they face. So far, the programme has reached out to 40 ACP countries and 160 cities.

The Commission is seeking to strengthen links between EU cities and cities in partner countries. The city-to-city partnership for sustainable urban development has so far contributed to the establishment of 57 partnerships active in the different dimensions of sustainable urban development.

The Commission is the co-founder of the Global Covenant of Mayors initiative, whose signatory cities commit to the implementation of sustainable energy policies as well as local climate change mitigation and adaptation activities. The initiative is the world's largest movement supporting cities in their work on energy and climate change, and has now been extended to Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as a new phase with the Eastern Partnership and in the Southern Neighbourhood, where a specific regional call for the proposal 'Climate for Cities' was launched in 2021. To date, the Global Covenant brings together more than 11 000 cities in 140 countries.

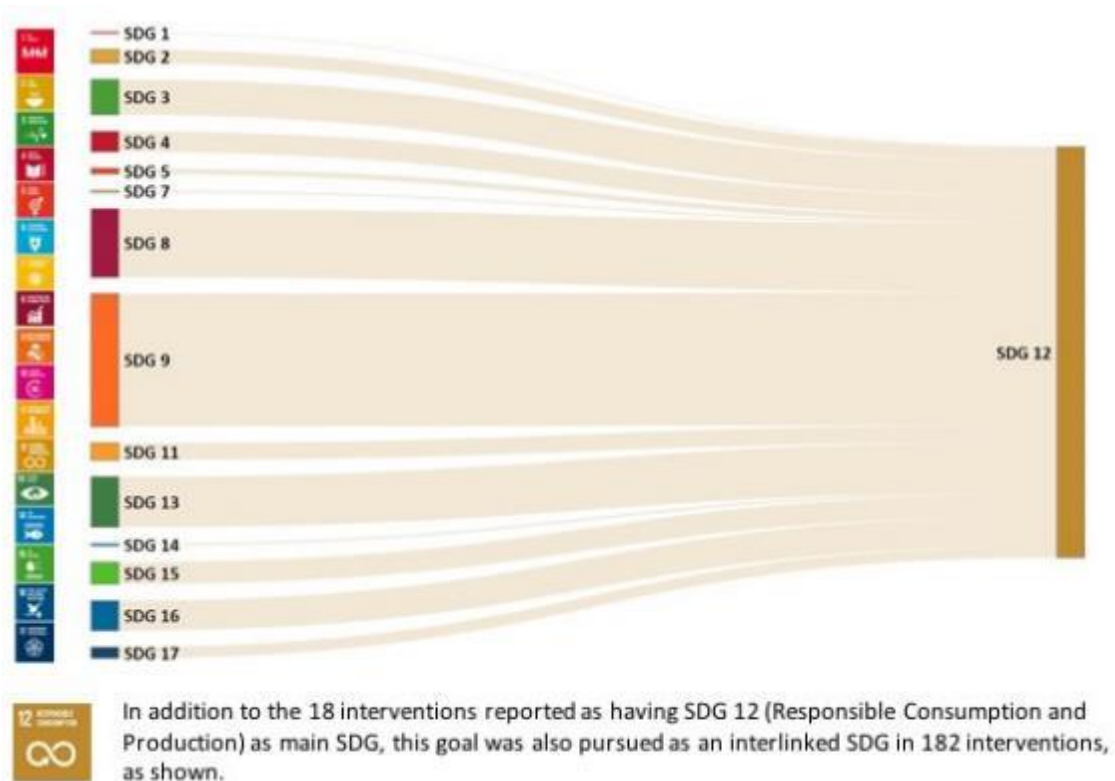
Urbanisation is one of the main drivers of disaster risk. The Commission is strengthening disaster preparedness in urban contexts with its humanitarian partners, as outlined in the *Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note*⁵⁵ published in 2021. Urban preparedness is one of the 2021-2024 funding priorities for the Disaster Preparedness Budget Line.

SDG #12 Responsible Consumption and Production

The EU is committed to pursuing its international cooperation on SCP, including the circular economy, as an essential contribution to SDG 12. EU international cooperation in these areas focuses mainly on developing awareness and knowledge to build the case for the green/circular economy transition, supporting policy and institutional frameworks including via country, regional and multilateral policy dialogues, promoting green business development in key value chains and mobilising finance for the global circular economy transition. Given the interlinkages between SDGs, a broad range of EU actions directly associated to the pursuit of several SDGs also contribute towards achieving responsible consumption and production (see Figure 6).

⁵⁵ European Commission, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, *DG ECHO Guidance Note: Disaster Preparedness*, 2021, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/dg_echo_guidance_note_-_disaster_preparedness_en.pdf

Figure 6: SDG 12 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



At global level, the objective is to engage at multilateral level to promote policies towards the use of standards, a level-playing field for the private sector and the provision of financial and technical assistance. The EU has continued the implementation of SWITCH to Green, the EU’s flagship initiative on SCP and the circular economy, which includes the SWITCH to Circular Economy Value Chains project and the regional SWITCH programmes in Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean. Support has been provided to initiatives like the Partnership for Action on the Green Economy (PAGE), the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on sustainable consumption and production (10YFP) and the One Planet Network, as well as the Green Economy Coalition (GEC)

In 2021, the EU launched the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE) at the margins of the fifth meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly (first session), in collaboration with UNEP and UNIDO. The Alliance aims to boost initiatives related to the circular economy transition, resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production, building on efforts deployed internationally. In addition, the EU, as a strategic partner, formally initiated the application process to join the African Circular Economy Alliance and the Circular Economy Coalition of Latin America and the Caribbean.

SDG #13 Climate Action

Climate change is a key priority of the EU’s external action and a central theme of the European Green Deal, together with the European Consensus, the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The Green Deal emphasises the EU’s major role as a global leader in tackling climate change and environmental challenges and represents the EU’s new growth strategy.

Reflecting this ambition, the EU has set the ambitious spending target of 30 % of the NDICI-Global Europe financial envelope in the period 2021-2027 to contribute to climate change objectives. In

addition, the Commission President committed to a further EUR 4 billion in international climate change finance in the 2021 State of the Union speech⁵⁶. The Commission is integrating climate change and the environment into all its policies and interventions. It continues to support the upgrade and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans, as well as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030.

In 2021, the Commission has allocated EUR 70.4 million in support of international climate governance, sustainable energy transition, the global pledge on reducing methane emissions, phasing out of coal and the just transition as well other environmental actions. Direct support was provided to 60 countries for the design and implementation of their NDCs that includes support in the formulation of EU funded programmes contributing to NDC objectives.

The Commission was also an early supporter of the African-led Great Green Wall initiative. Specifically, the Regreening Africa initiative has enabled the restoration of more than 600 000 hectares of land in the eight participating countries, contributing to climate action. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA) and forest partnerships, the new and holistic EU approach to support sustainable forest management in partner countries, also contribute to the objectives of the Green Deal, particularly climate change, biodiversity and circular economy.

The Commission together with EU Member States engaged to encourage ‘Sustainable Cocoa’, pooling efforts for the sustainable transformation of the cocoa value chain, support agri-ecological practices and agroforestry, as well as forest protection and rehabilitation and thus contribute to address climate change and environmental issues.

The Commission is also supporting specific Green Deal dialogues and partnerships, with climate action at their core, at regional level in the Western Balkans (Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and its implementing regional project) and at country level in Turkey, Morocco and Ukraine.

Through the strategic partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement (SPIPA) project, the EU continued to engage G20 countries (Russia, Canada, Australia, South Africa, etc.) on topics related to climate change, with approximately 150 events delivered with about 15 000 participants including approximately 3 000 officials targeted. The strategic direction for SPIPA was extended to reflect the emerging European Green Deal/Green Recovery narrative in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the EU’s positioning as a champion in this regard, SPIPA was considered a suitable vehicle for introducing European Green Deal approaches in climate-related activities and discourses with partner countries.

The new Global Gateway launched in 2021 is an important tool to promote digital technologies, with a focus on climate, infrastructure and energy. By investing in both mitigation and climate resilience, as well as in clean energy, it supports partner countries’ green transformation on the way to achieving the SDGs and commitments of the Paris Agreement.

The Commission made a strong contribution to the success of the EU participation in COP26, including through EU support to the Just Transition Partnership with South Africa, a EUR 100 million pledge to the Adaptation Fund and a EUR 1 billion contribution to the Global Forest Financial pledge.

⁵⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_21_4701

In 2021 in the Communication on the EU's Humanitarian Action: new challenges, same principles⁵⁷, the Commission highlighted the impact of climate change on humanitarian needs and set out how the Commission can further adapt its humanitarian response to the growing and shifting needs engendered by climate change and environmental crises in many parts of the world. The Commission factors climate and environmental risk considerations into humanitarian operations. To this end, one of the priorities of the dedicated budget line for preparedness in the EU humanitarian aid budget focuses on climate and environmental resilience for the period 2021-2024. In 2021, the Commission dedicated EUR 75 million to disaster preparedness activities, including to support communities to prepare for the impacts of climate change, and aimed to mainstream disaster preparedness across EU funded humanitarian actions.

Throughout 2021, the Commission also developed minimum environmental requirements⁵⁸ for its humanitarian partners as part of its approach to reducing the environmental footprint of humanitarian aid. The requirements will push humanitarian organisations to reduce their carbon emissions by providing renewable energy and reducing deforestation in their programmes.

SDG #14 Life below Water

Global progress in addressing major threats, including pollution and eutrophication, overfishing and destruction of habitats, as well as the impacts of climate change, has been slow and most SDG 14 targets may not be reached by 2030. The EU continues to work on capacity-building and spur local and regional actions on effective governance and the protection and sustainable use of marine resources. The role of the EU external action in support of SDG 14 is growing. The EU promotes an integrated approach to effectively address the drivers of ocean degradation while linking food security, nutrition and livelihoods with natural resources preservation.

The additional financing support to the FISH4ACP programme will contribute to unlock the potential of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific working with twelve value chains in twelve ACP countries to maximise economic returns and social benefits, while minimising detrimental effects on natural habitats and aquatic resources.

In the Southern Neighbourhood, regional programmes contributed to the implementation of the Barcelona Convention by acting either on the causes of biodiversity loss or on the preservation of endangered ecosystems. For example, the IMAP-MPA project (Towards achieving the Good Environmental Status of the Mediterranean Sea and coast through an ecologically representative and efficiently managed and monitored Marine Protected Area) has strengthened and further developed the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network. The WES project (Water and Environment Support) has provided technical assistance and training on depollution of the Mediterranean Sea, on plastics in particular.

SDG #15 Life on Land

SDG 15 received particular attention ahead of 2021 via the EU Biodiversity strategy 2030 and the Farm-to-Fork strategy. In 2021, the Commission adopted a new EU Forest strategy for 2030, reaffirming the commitment to deliver on the objectives set out in the 2019 Communication to

⁵⁷ [COM\(2021\) 110 final of 10 March 2021.](#)

⁵⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment_en

Protect and Restore the World's Forests⁵⁹, including by working in close partnership with global partners on forest protection, restoration and sustainable forest management. Further to this, the Commission also adopted a proposal for a regulation to curb EU-driven deforestation and forest degradation linked to six commodities⁶⁰.

Important international summits took place in 2021, highlighting the importance of natural resources, ecosystems and biodiversity for combatting poverty and strengthening livelihoods including COP26 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and UN Food Systems Summit. At the UNFCCC COP26, the Commission pledged EUR 1 billion to support the critical role of the world's forests in combatting climate change. EUR 250 million of this will be specifically for the Congo Basin. It further stated its intention to take forward a comprehensive, holistic and integrated Forest Partnership approach in addressing the forest sector with partners. The EU furthermore participated in the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15, part 1) and engaged to reach an ambitious agreement at the COP15 part 2, due to take place in 2022.

To implement its ambitions, the Commission has mainstreamed biodiversity across all its interventions and has developed specific actions such as the NaturAfrica initiative designed to protect biodiversity while creating economic opportunities and better livelihoods for local populations. The formulation of the NaturAfrica initiative started in 2021 in six regional landscapes and in several countries (Togo, Benin, Cameroon, DRC, Burundi, and Congo). Through the 'Landscape Approach', NaturAfrica aims to improve the livelihood of 65 million people, sequestering up to 21 billion tons of carbon, stabilising 3 million km² of land and ensuring water security. In the Sahel, continuous EU actions on land restoration and alternative livelihoods development support the African-led Great Green Wall initiative. Commission President von der Leyen pledged EUR 700 million/year to this initiative at the One Planet Summit in January 2021. In total, more than 150 000 hectares of land were restored in 2021 under the Regreening Africa programme, notably through agroforestry. In the Pacific Islands region, the multi-donor Kiwa Initiative supports the use of nature-based solutions for climate resilience by preserving biodiversity. The first project launched in 2021 and aims to establish an agroecological farms network.

The Commission also further pursued its work on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), notably via Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPA), which have helped improve governance and regulatory frameworks leading to greater transparency and accountability, as well as sustainable forest management. In addition, the development of forest partnerships, the new and holistic EU approach to support sustainable forest management in partner countries, started with ten countries.

To consolidate this work in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), the EU, its Member States and the EIB are engaging in a TEI Partnership for forests to complement the VPA and address forest bioeconomy to foster job creation, promote zero-deforestation agriculture and conserve forest biodiversity. The EU-Honduras VPA was signed and ratified in 2021, thus making Honduras the first country to achieve this in the Americas. In Honduras, the EU contributed to introduce Climate-Smart Agriculture techniques based on agroecological approaches in key value chains linked to the country agricultural

⁵⁹ [COM\(2019\) 352 final of 23 July 2019.](#)

⁶⁰ [COM\(2021\) 706 final of 17 November 2021.](#)

and timber sectors. The action will improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through micro-credits and training in sustainable agroforestry techniques, while curtailing illegal timber activities thus contributing to conserving forest biodiversity, increasing carbon sequestration, enhancing food security and reducing climate-driven migration.

Selected results 2018-2021

28 200 000 food-insecure people received EU assistance.

18 800 000 women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and children under five were reached by nutrition-related interventions supported by the EU.

21 057 000 smallholders were reached with EU-supported interventions aimed at increasing their sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land.

2 701 000 ha of agricultural and pastoral ecosystems were managed by sustainable land management practices with EU support.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁶¹

- Food insecure people from 54 countries have received EU assistance, which is an increase of 12 countries compared to last year. Assistance includes, for example, support to improve subsistence farming practices, provision of social transfers (in cash or in kind) to poor or vulnerable individuals aimed at reducing their deficits in food consumption or interventions that aim at improving nutritional adequacy of food intake.
- In Nigeria, the EU Support to Food Security and Resilience reached more than 100 000 members of farming households who accessed reserves for grain and seeds for the new planting season.

Table 2: EU RF indicators disaggregated by sex

| EU Results Framework indicators | Total | women/girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|--|------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Number of food-insecure people receiving EU assistance | 28 200 000 | 6 520 000 | 5 947 000 | 15 703 000 |
| Number of women of reproductive age, adolescent girls and children under five reached by nutrition-related interventions supported by the EU | 18 800 000 | 2 411 000 | 1 352 000 | 15 033 000 |
| Number of smallholders reached with EU-supported interventions aimed to increase their sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land | 21 057 000 | 2 502 000 | 2 478 000 | 16 077 000 |

⁶¹ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

29 765 000 individuals accessing electricity with EU support through new or improved access.

31 000 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy generation capacity installed with EU support.

234 countries and cities developed climate change and/or disaster risk reduction strategies with EU support.

125 countries and cities implemented climate change and/or disaster risk reduction strategies with EU support.

24 000 MSMEs applied sustainable consumption practices with EU support.

95 871 000 tonnes of CO₂e greenhouse gas emissions avoided with EU support.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁶²

- The value for renewable energy generation capacity installed with EU support increased by 72 % since last year (from 18 000 megawatts for reporting year 2018-2020 to 31 000 megawatts for reporting year 2018-2021). The value for CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions avoided with EU support increased by 67 % since last year (from 57 356 000 tonnes CO₂ eq for reporting year 2018-2020 to 95 871 000 tonnes CO₂ eq for reporting year 2018-2021). These large increases reflect improved reporting due to the systematic inclusion of all blending operations in the latest results data collection exercises.
- Of the 234 countries and cities that developed climate change and/or disaster risk strategies, 67 were countries and 167 were cities.
- The Municipal Project Support Facility assists local authorities in the Eastern Neighbourhood Partnership (ENP) partner countries to achieve the 20 % energy savings target by 2020 by helping them become more energy efficient, ensuring that their energy consumption is more sustainable and thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions. So far, the measures implemented with project support have contributed to avoiding 231 000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year, mainly in Armenia, but also in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

1 143 megawatts of renewable energy generation capacity installed with EU support.

37 disaster risk reduction public policies: a) developed, and/or b) under implementation with EU support.

1 028 248 tonnes of CO₂e greenhouse gas emissions avoided with EU support.

Source: IPA Performance Framework indicators⁶³

543 000 km² marine areas were under protection with EU support.

75 806 000 ha of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems were under protection with EU support.

68 975 000 ha of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems were under sustainable management with EU support.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁶⁴

⁶² Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

⁶³ Selected results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA)). Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

- In Latin America, 32 million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems were under protection, and 13 million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems were managed to ensure biological diversity and to preserve natural heritage with EU support. In Bolivia, for example, the Budget Support ‘Integrated water and natural resource management’ contributed to 18 000 hectares of forest with forest management plans.
- In the Caribbean, a multi-country project for civil society and small enterprises to conserve marine and coastal biodiversity has identified priority marine areas in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Lucia, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Vincent and Grenadines and Grenada. Under this intervention, the EU has provided support for conservation of marine protected areas of 2 800 km².

3.3. Digitalisation, Science, Technology and Innovation

Main achievements

Digital Global Gateway

The release of the Global Gateway Joint Communication⁶⁵ marked an important milestone for advancing the Commission’s global approach on digital connectivity. In 2021, the groundwork for starting the Digital Global Gateway was laid through an informal Commission inter-service group with the aim of defining the EU’s global policy objectives on global digital connectivity as well as assessing appropriate inter-service coordination mechanisms that would allow for conception and implementation. This work was subsequently reflected in the Global Gateway Joint Communication and will be closely linked with the Global Gateway’s governance structure. Moreover, Commission services together with EU Delegations successfully anchored digital connectivity in regional and country MIPs and prepared a preliminary list of global digital connectivity flagships. To foster a ‘Team Europe’ approach, a working group on digital connectivity has been established under the global Digital for Development (D4D) Hub gathering Member States, agencies, development finance institutions and the private sector. The working group will contribute to the design and implementation of the global masterplan.

Operationalisation of the Digital for Development (D4D) Hub and Launch LAC Branch

Over the last two year the Commission and EU Member States have joined forces to establish a platform for Team Europe coordination and multistakeholder dialogue aimed at strengthening the EU global role in support of a human-centric model of digital transformation. This is the D4D Hub, a strategic tool that was launched at high-level by President Von Der Leyen in December 2020. The D4D Hub has a global scope and operates through its regional branches to establish digital partnerships and boost joint investments with EU partner countries with interventions at country, regional and global level. Under the German Presidency in 2020, the first regional branch to be established was the Africa branch, followed by the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Branch launched on 14 December 2021 under the Slovenian Presidency. The launch of the LAC Branch concludes an intense year of successes for EU-LAC cooperation on digital matters. Among the highlights the progress towards the establishment of the EU-LAC Digital Alliance, in line with the

⁶⁴ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

⁶⁵ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 1 December 2021](#).

recommendations of the EU-LAC Ministerial Meeting of 14 December 2020, aims to foster a strong human centred approach to digital transformation and bring the EU and LAC digital markets closer together. In June 2021 the EU's BELLA programme celebrated the landing of the submarine fibre-optic cable between the EU and LAC, which provides secure and high-capacity data connections for more than 12 000 educational and research institutions from both regions.

Achievements of the rapid digital COVID-19 response

COVID-19 has had a far-reaching impact on the global economy, health, and social changes – especially in developing countries. In response to the pandemic, the Commission has adopted a 'Team Europe' approach in supporting its partner countries.

With the aim of providing creative solutions, nine projects were selected for implementation out of 1 000 proposals received from over 300 partners from Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. These out-of-the-box solutions make up the #SmartDevelopmentFund, a Team Europe initiative implemented jointly by the Commission with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Development Cooperation Agency (GIZ). The overall objective of the #SmartDevelopmentFund is to develop, scale-up and promote innovative digital solutions, addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With a total of EUR 20 million (EU contribution EUR 10 million) nine projects are being implemented across the world, scaling impact, and helping hundreds of thousands of people leverage the digital transition to deal with the current health crisis. The initiatives include: 150 000 listeners have been provided with factual and up to date information on the pandemic through the CallvsCorona hotline, helping to fight fake news and raise awareness; and 200 000 youth were engaged in challenges, delivering 9 000 prototypes on Yoma, a platform that helps equip youth with digital skills, allowing them to also build a digital CV and link them with appropriate job opportunities.

Set up of Technical Assistance facilities

In 2021, technical assistance support facilities were setup in different domains covering Space, Earth Observation, Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and Digital (governance, economy, infrastructures, and policy). A previous smaller facility was completely used up following strong demand from EU Delegations. The facilities launched in 2021 currently pool around 25 experts across the different domains.

Preparatory steps for a future Knowledge Hub Digital (Part I) were made in 2021, committing an amount of EUR 23.5 million for the first phase of a knowledge hub to be established in 2022.

Responsible Digitalisation: Policy and regulatory frameworks

Digital policy action and guidance was provided for the national programming exercise. At regional level, a framework for digital interventions and policy was prepared, in particular for the Sub-Saharan Africa regional MIP.

In 2021, important steps were taken to support the creation and roll out of adequate regulatory frameworks on digital and data. An important part of this was the start of the operationalisation of the EU-AU Data Flagship, a major inter-regional programme aiming to strengthen the African data economy and data society and linking it with the European data market. The programme is currently being developed jointly by the EU and AU, and a range of EU Member States to build up Team Europe initiatives. As well as actions focusing on data infrastructure, data professionals and data

innovation, the Flagship will support the development and implementation of data regulatory frameworks to build a fair and inclusive African data economy.

Initial exchanges were held with some stakeholders with experience in telecom regulation in Africa to assess possible future actions and to set the basis for ongoing discussions.

The PRIDA project initiated Sector Digital strategies at the African Commission level on education, health and agriculture. Commission services were also associated with GIZ (and Smart Africa) activities on the Continental Data policy and the continental e-ID interoperability framework.

Efforts were made in 2021 to better leverage digital know-how, connections and resources based in the EU delegations (EUD) in Geneva, New York and Addis Ababa. A post was created at the EUD in Geneva to work on digital issues. These efforts have set a tangible basis for better information gathering and exchange, and better outreach to various stakeholders, EU Member States and partner countries.

With regards to digital at the multilateral level, Internet Governance and the EU's open internet policy some significant steps have been taken. The Commission committed EUR 50 million under the Global Challenges MIP in 2021. External expertise was recruited to advise on strategic options with regards to 'multilateralism and digital', and work has progressed towards the preparation of an annual action plan in 2022. A side event was held during the Paris Peace Forum in 2021 on the topic of 'Open Internet' with the participation of Commissioner Urpilainen.

The Commission and the EEAS launched the project 'Promotion and Development of the Open Internet in Africa'. The project's objective is to reach and influence stakeholders across selected African countries to ensure the continued openness of the Internet.

The Commission has engaged in exploratory discussions with Smart Africa in 2021, envisaging possible cooperation / partnership in 2022 and onwards.

Digital skills and entrepreneurship

In 2021 we have contributed to the development of the 'Theory of Change'⁶⁶ for Education, defining the key enablers and priorities to achieve inclusive and quality education, which has allowed for the integration of digital literacy and skills, as well as of digital learning in Commission services' approach to education. Additional support was also provided to define relevant education indicators in this regard. Furthermore, support has been provided to national programming to ensure the inclusion of digital literacy and skills in the MIPs. Under the PRIDA project with the African Union Commission, Commission services participated in the Digital Education taskforce, contributing to the analysis and preparation for the continental Digital Education strategy, which will be further developed in 2022. Additional human resources were mobilised to work on digital education as of 2022, including on the topics of digital literacy and skills.

E-services, including e-governance

Through technical assistance the EUDs were supported to reflect e-governance in the programming both in national and regional programmes as well as in annual action plans (AAPs)/Action Documents 2021/2022 and continued support for capacity building on the topic in EUDs was provided.

⁶⁶ [Impact evaluation centre - Regional Policy - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eip/eip-impact-evaluation-centre-regional-policy)

The creation of the digital governance working group under the D4D Hub African Branch, that has among others a strong focus on e-governance, will contribute to identifying and implementing e-governance projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In late 2021, EUR 10 million was committed to support digitalisation efforts in the Horn of Africa (HoA) through the HoA Initiative. The HoA Initiative has two main pillars: GovStack and cyber security. The funding will help governments embark on digital transformation. The GovStack model aims to build a common understanding and technical practice on fundamental reusable and interoperable digital components, or digital building blocks, through which governments can easily create or modify their digital platforms, services, and applications while also simplifying cost, time, and resource requirements.

At the African continental level, contributions were made to developing the AU Interoperability Framework for Digital ID that aims at ensuring interoperability between AU Member States digital identities.

Cyber Security

The Commission has also supported cyber capacity building, especially in African States, enabling a more efficient response to cyber threats. Cooperation has increased with EU Member States, across Commission services, the EEAS and EU CyberNet as well as global partners such as the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE). Finally, the creation and implementation of the Cyber Thematic Working Group, within the Africa branch of the D4D Hub, has allowed the Commission and Member States including Luxembourg, Germany and France to conduct a mapping of existing projects, which will serve as support for the establishment for future projects and frameworks.

Space and Earth Observation

2021 saw increased visibility of the EU space programme and its uptake as a key tool for the green transition in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific and Africa. Three technical assistance facilities (TAF) dedicated to space and Earth observation have been launched to support Commission services and Delegations to strengthen the use of space technologies in support of partner countries and EU policies. At the end of 2021 one assignment has been launched to identify possible cooperation avenues on space and Earth observation data with the Pacific region and the main Pacific regional organisations while the terms of reference for another three assignments are being finalised: one to provide actionable recommendations on the establishment of a Copernicus regional data centre for emergency management in Panama; one to outline the possible contribution of Earth observation and space technologies to two Team Europe initiatives on sustainable forest management in the Gran Chaco region and sustainable fisheries in the Patagonian Sea; and one to identify and design a long-term strategy for space and Earth observation between Africa and the EU beyond 2025.

Moreover, in 2021, confirming the outcomes of the EU-LAC ministerial of December 2020, the decision was taken to finance the establishment of two Copernicus regional data centres in Central (Panama) and South America (Chile). There have been developments also in the Philippines, where works for a Copernicus mirror site for improved climate change mitigation and adaptation, reporting on forests, disaster risk reduction and marine spatial planning, have advanced and should lead to the launch of the mirror site in 2022.

2021 has also been an important year in terms of planning of future actions in the field of space and Earth observation. Missions have been identified for a long-term Earth observation strategy in Africa and talks with EU delegations and partner countries as well as the AU, have started. GMES&Africa, the biggest programme for cooperation on Earth observation between Africa and the EU has come to a successful conclusion of its first phase and the second phase will be launched soon. The African Union and the European Union committed on several occasions in 2021 (e.g., Kigali declaration, Lisbon Manifesto, and the GMES&Africa forum etc.), to strengthen cooperation on Earth observation and space.

The BELLA project supports improved connectivity and exchange of data (including R&I and Copernicus) between EU and LAC. 2021 saw the operationalisation of the cable connection between the EU and Brazil as well as the expansion of the terrestrial network in Latin America that will reach Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Panama and other countries in 2022.

Science, Technology and Innovation

2021 marked an overhaul of actions in science, technology and innovation (STI) to improve coordination, strategic orientation, and policy formulation in STI for development. Internal coordination is now ensured through the newly created Research Coordination Group involving Commission personnel working on geographical and thematic issues. Coordination across Commission services is implemented through the STI4Dev Interservice Working Group (IWG).

In the framework of the STI4Dev IWG, an **STI for Development strategy** is being developed to support the implementation of MIPs and RIPs and help implement the objectives of key policies and initiatives decided over the year, including Europe's new global approach to cooperation in research and innovation and the Global Gateway strategy's priority on Education and research.

2021 also saw the launch of new activities on the ground. The **ACP-EU programme to strengthen research and innovation capacity in ACP countries** (EUR 60 million) is the most recent research and innovation (R&I) programme of the ACP Group of States, funded through the 11th European Development Fund. It targets R&I public and private stakeholders across ACP countries and regions with a comprehensive package of opportunities. The programme aims at reinforcing national and regional R&I eco-systems through three interlinked components: the R&I Policy Support Facility; the ACP Innovation Fund; and the ACP R&I Hub. The first activities under the ACP Innovation Fund and the Policy Support Facility were launched in 2021. A new pilot action, the **STI for SDGs Roadmaps in Africa project**, was initiated with the Joint Research Centre to provide support to the development of effective innovation ecosystems towards the SDGs in Africa. It will provide a mapping of STI ecosystems with an in-depth STI for SDG analysis, and work on pilot STI for SDG roadmaps identifying a policy mix to inform Commission programming and action documents.

SDG #9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

SDG 9 aims at building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation. Sustainable investments in energy, transport and digital infrastructure, together with skills development, the modernisation of the regulatory framework and an enabling industrial environment are crucial drivers of economic growth and development.

To progress in this direction, in 2021 the Commission continued to foster the connectivity agenda with a global reach, as a means to advance EU values and policy priorities (Green Deal, Digitalisation and Sustainable Growth) in alignment with the SDGs targets, through the adoption of the Global

Gateway Joint Communication⁶⁷ on 1 December 2021, which provides the policy framework for EU connectivity actions around the world in the decade to come. It is anchored in the 2030 Agenda and seeks to align with the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment.

The Global Gateway includes five dimensions: digitalisation; climate and energy; transport; health; and education and research. It will not just be based on physical sustainable infrastructure, but also include soft skills and regulatory environments.

Special attention is being given to connectivity with Africa, but the strategy also envisages actions for the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods, as well as the Western Balkans. To boost the implementation of SDG 9 in Africa, in 2021, the Commission continued to support strategic multimodal transport corridor development that builds on resilient cross-border infrastructure. In addition, the Action 'Knowledge Hub – Global Gateway Support Mechanism' adopted in December 2021 will contribute to the development of the connectivity agenda and the application of good practices on quality infrastructure throughout the infrastructure life cycle, in particular in the transport sector.

Selected results 2018-2021

79 000 km of road were supported by the EU through construction, rehabilitation and maintenance.

- Most of the length of road was maintained (59 000 km), followed by constructed (14 000 km) and rehabilitated (6 000 km).
- In Ethiopia, the Road Sector Policy Support programme (SPSP IV) supported the establishment of an efficient road network at federal, regional and rural level. This Budget Support programme contributed to the maintenance of 28 000 km of road in the country.
- In the West Bank, the project Area C Development programme in the West Bank - Package II supported communities with basic social and public infrastructure such as roads, schools, public parks, and public buildings. Among others, 10 km of road were constructed to improve access to basic infrastructure.

3.4. Sustainable Growth and Jobs

Main achievements

The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs calls for a concerted international effort between governments, multilateral institutions and the private sector to mobilise existing resources in support of clean and green investment that both advance prosperity and contribute to tackling climate change and preventing environmental degradation whilst leaving no one behind. In the present context of the pandemic, which has dramatically worsened public finances in many developing countries, we need to make use of all means of implementation, including public, private, domestic and international resources, as well as debt relief solutions.

⁶⁷ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 1 December 2021](#).

The EU is the world largest provider of grant-based budget support. Budget support is results-oriented and based on a permanent policy dialogue with national governments, aiming to assess and manage macro and fiscal risks. Within this policy framework, the EU is able to promote mitigating measures to unsustainable fiscal policies, such as technical assistance on Public Finance Management (PFM), Domestic Revenue Mobilisation (DRM), debt management and procurement.

With the expiration of the original Addis Tax Initiative (ATI) in 2020, the EU took a leading role in the co-drafting and launching of the renewed ATI Declaration 2025. In December 2021, the EU endorsed the new declaration that promotes fair and transparent tax systems around four commitments and partnership principles, which in turn reflect EU priorities of addressing inequalities and climate change, digital transition and strengthening gender equality. Along with the other development partners, the EU committed to maintaining previous resource pledges in the area of DRM for development within the context of the ATI.

The EU also supports the voluntary re-channelling of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) from advanced to developing economies, in line with the proposals made by International Monetary Fund (IMF) to scale up the lending capacity of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust (PRGT) and to establish a new Resilience and Sustainability Trust (RST). The EU encourages the international community through, for example, the G20 to explore also other ways of re-channelling SDRs, for example through Multilateral Development Banks. It encourages EU Member States to contribute to the total global ambition of USD 100 billion of voluntary contributions for countries most in need as endorsed by the G20.

In the context of the Global Recovery, debt-for-SDG swaps have the potential for linking debt relief and investments in exchange for firm commitments to the SDGs, in view of a ‘green recovery, a digital recovery, a just and resilient recovery.’ The Commission, in close collaboration with EU Member States interested in the instrument, has explored how to develop the use of debt-for-SDG swaps under a ‘Team Europe’ approach. Debt swaps are not an instrument to address debt sustainability and they don’t have the potential to allow large-scale financing to developing countries and close their SDG funding gap, but debt-for-SDG swaps can be part of a toolbox of different instruments that could, together, support countries in making progress toward the SDGs. Their main advantage is the strong dialogue between creditor and debtor country on the investment policy.

Public finance alone will not suffice, however, and sustainable finance has the potential to mobilise additional private international and domestic investors at scale in developing countries to finance their sustainable recovery. In 2021, the EU has continued its work in the field of sustainable finance to facilitate the mobilisation of additional private international and domestic capital for developing countries at scale, leaving no one behind. In that context, the Commission has started exploring, together with development finance institutions through a ‘Team Europe’ approach, the scaling up and further developing of green bond markets in partner countries by addressing challenges to green bond issuance from both the investor and issuer sides. At the same time, it was decided to develop an EU Sustainable Finance strategy to scale up sustainable finance in low- and middle-income countries.

In addition, the NDICI-Global Europe for the MFF 2021-2027 provides additional financing through innovative financial instruments, notably guarantees. The objective is to encourage investment that is green, employment intensive and fosters poverty reduction and inclusive development. Increased attention is put on transparency and debt sustainability considerations in the use of guarantees and

blending instruments. Synergies between these financial instruments and budget support also provide increased leverage in policy dialogue.

The EU applies an integrated approach to attracting more investment. The EU budgetary guarantee is an EU financial tool created in 2017 under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD). The EFSD, and its successor EFSD+, aim to bridge the gap between the financing already available and the financing still needed to create jobs, boost growth, and meet the SDGs.

With over EUR 1.75 billion of the EFSD and EFSD+ Guarantees, the EU has shared the risks involved in investing together with development banks and private investors. By doing so, the EU encourages financial institutions to come in, lend to local entrepreneurs and finance development projects. In addition to EFSD/EFSD+ guarantees and blending financing, the EU also provides technical assistance and investment in climate support. To date, the EU has contracted EUR 117 million for technical assistance accompanying the EFSD and EFSD+ guarantees, of which EUR 24 million was contracted in 2021.

In 2021 actions aimed to improve the business environment and investment climate; increase financial inclusion and access to financial services; and promote trade and trade facilitation for sustainable and inclusive development and value chains. Decent work was addressed by improving social, labour, and environmental sustainability; overcoming gender inequality and barriers to women's and youth economic empowerment; and improving vocational and educational training (VET) policies and systems that are more responsive to labour market needs and opportunities.

EUR 3 million was committed to extend the EU expert facility on employment, labour and social protection (SOCIEUX+), providing a demand-driven facility which provides short-term, peer-to-peer technical assistance to Western Balkan countries. The action will support the Western Balkans countries in developing employment, labour and social protection strategies, systems and policies that are more inclusive, effective, responsive, resilient and sustainable - all critical in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis.

Several actions have addressed the employment dimension, in particular President von der Leyen's commitment to eliminate child labour. A EUR 10 million programme was adopted aiming at reducing child labour in key sectors and countries where child labour is still persistent and prevalent, and for which trade with the EU is significant.

A Team Europe initiative on investing in young businesses in Africa (TEI IYBA) was launched to address the challenge of access to medium- and long-term finance that young African businesses and entrepreneurs face in their initial growth stages. A EUR 22 million programme was adopted to boost decent job creation and inclusive and sustainable growth aiming at providing specific technical assistance and capacity-building on IYBA related issues. This will improve strategic alignment and cooperation of EU and other international partner's interventions contributing to the IYBA TEI strategic approach and enhance the capacity of Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) in providing sustainable services to the young business ecosystem.

In VET, a EUR 15 million pilot project in 11 African countries was launched to align the provision of skills training to the opportunities and needs of investment programmes, notably the EFSD+. Bringing VET provision closer to labour market opportunities and needs was also part of an envisaged TEI for opportunity driven VET for which preparation started in 2021.

The implementation of EU funded flagship programmes supporting the improvement of the investment climate and business environment through the Trade, Private Sector Development and Engagement (TPSDE) Facility, Investment Climate Reform Facility, Rapid Response Window and Business Friendly programme continued. EU delegations were actively supported on issues related to Private Sector Development, Investment Climate, Business Environment Reform, Trade and Employment.

The Commission through the TPSDE Facility continued supporting EU delegations and headquarters on issues related to trade, private sector and investment climate. The annual TPSDE training took place encompassing ten sessions with approximately 250 participants from EU delegations.

Regular public private dialogues (PPD) in partner countries notably for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) were promoted. Examples include a virtual marketplace on energy, funding of programmes providing capacity-building for PPD in the clean cooking sector in Kenya, supporting PPD for post COVID-19 recovery in Botswana, and boosting renewable energy through PPD in Tanzania.

In the area of Responsible Sourcing of Raw Materials, the EU increased its financial support to the European Partnership on Responsible Minerals (EPRM) as an accompanying measure to the EU Conflict Mineral Regulation⁶⁸, which entered into force on 1 January 2021. Seven new projects were selected for financing and started in January 2021, promoting the rights and working conditions of artisanal and small-scale mining communities in several Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas such as Peru, Colombia, Honduras, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Moreover, beyond support to the small-scale artisanal mining partners in the ACP-EU Development Minerals programme (involving about 30 000 miners), the EU supported the implementation of the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), now reaching 56 implementing countries with 27 from Africa, and the integration of climate smart mining in the Extractive Global Programmatic Support Trust Fund.

The *2021 Aid for Trade (AfT) Progress Report*⁶⁹ was published in October 2021 confirming the EU and its Member States remain the main donors of AfT (38 % of global AfT). The report included an analysis of the COVID-19 response on AfT, confirming EU AfT helped increasing partner countries' trading capacity, helping them tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Women's economic empowerment, environment and biodiversity protection, as well as digitalisation have been the key areas of EU AfT action. Africa continued to receive the largest share with 43 % of the total volume, followed by Asia (21 %), Europe – the EU Neighbourhood and accession countries (13 %) and America (8 %). Seven thematic reviews were produced in 2021.

⁶⁸ [Regulation \(EU\) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017](#) laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas.

⁶⁹ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, EU aid for trade progress report 2021 : review of progress on the implementation of the updated EU aid for trade strategy of 2017, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2841/018990>

SDG #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

During 2021 the EU strengthened efforts for **women's economic empowerment** in partner countries by launching a new EUR 20 million partnership with the Tony Elumelu Foundation and EU development agency supporting 2 500 African women entrepreneurs.

The **Team Europe initiative investing in young business in Africa (TEI IYBA)** was launched to address the challenge of access to medium- and long-term finance that young African businesses and entrepreneurs face in their initial growth stages. The Commission already approved EUR 22 million to boost decent job creation and inclusive and sustainable growth aiming to provide specific technical assistance and capacity-building on IYBA related issues; to improve strategic alignment and cooperation of EU and other international partner's interventions contributing to the IYBA TEI strategic approach, and enhancing the capacity of Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) in providing sustainable services to the young business ecosystem.

The Commission continued promoting **trade facilitation and aid for trade (Aft)**. The 2021 report of the latter included an analysis of COVID-19 response on Aft, confirming that the EU Aft helped increasing partner countries' trading capacity, helping them tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and confirmed that the EU and its Member States remain the main donors of Aft.

The President von der Leyen's commitment to eliminate **child labour** in trade with the EU resulted in the adoption of EUR 10 million new programme to address child labour in supply chains. To address the forthcoming sustainable corporate governance directive the Commission prepared accompanying measures for partner countries. EUR 3 million were committed to extend the SOCIEUX+ project to Western Balkan countries.

The Commission continued to promote regular **public private dialogue (PPD)** in partner countries notably for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Overall effort for the implementation of the key objectives related to private sector development (PSD), investment climate and business environment reform with regard to the joint PSD strategic framework were also strengthened.

Key partnerships of the EU with the UN and the OECD on responsible business conduct (RBC) and corporate due diligence strengthened multilateralism and contributed to important policy development and business model changes through the promotion of international standards and Conventions in Asia, in the Americas and in the G7 and G20 fora. Partnership Instrument actions on RBC (EUR 24.5 million) continued to encourage the uptake of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Tripartite Declaration, and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Latin American and Asian supply chains levelling the playing field for businesses that integrate environmental and human rights considerations into their operations and supply chains. Examples of achievements include the development by OECD of new datasets and indicators for policymakers and the private sector to measure the social and environment impacts of business activities in global supply chains with a focus on Asia. Seminars and training sessions on decent work/international labour standards were delivered by ILO in Asia reaching over 850 companies (half of which were SMEs) making a total of over 2 560 businesses reached since the beginning of the project. UNDP heightened awareness of Human Rights Due Diligence through 19 training session involving 1 245 participants, as well as through over 60 workshops/conferences hosting over 4 000 attendees, including EU representatives presenting the

latest EU policy developments on corporate sustainability due diligence. In addition, ten small grants to civil society organisations (CSOs) working on access to remedy were granted.

Case study: Support to the clean cooking sector in Kenya through Technical Assistance (TA) to improve public-private dialogues (PPD)

Fuelwood and charcoal production is one of the major driving factors of deforestation in Kenya. The annual demand for charcoal is estimated at 2.5 million tonnes, requiring 25 million tonnes of wood. About 40-75 % of the charcoal consumed in Kenya is produced in natural woodlands in arid and semi-arid lands. Household fuel use in Kenya contributes to 22-35 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions each year, which is equivalent to 30-40 % of total Kenyan greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Kenyan Ministry of Health estimates that 21 500 premature deaths per year result from diseases caused by air pollution from cooking.

Context

The Investment Climate Reform (ICR) Facility provided technical assistance to the Clean Cooking Association of Kenya (CCAK), which is the sector champion influencing an appropriate and sustainable market environment and capacity development of its members and other stakeholders, enabling them to promote the adoption of clean and efficient cooking solutions in Kenya. The ICR Facility focused on strengthening the existing PPD structures in the clean cooking sector through tailored advice and the production of knowledge materials to support advocacy efforts for business environment reforms in the sector. The ICR Facility also trained the CCAK secretariat on conducting and maintaining an effective and efficient PPD mechanism.

Objectives

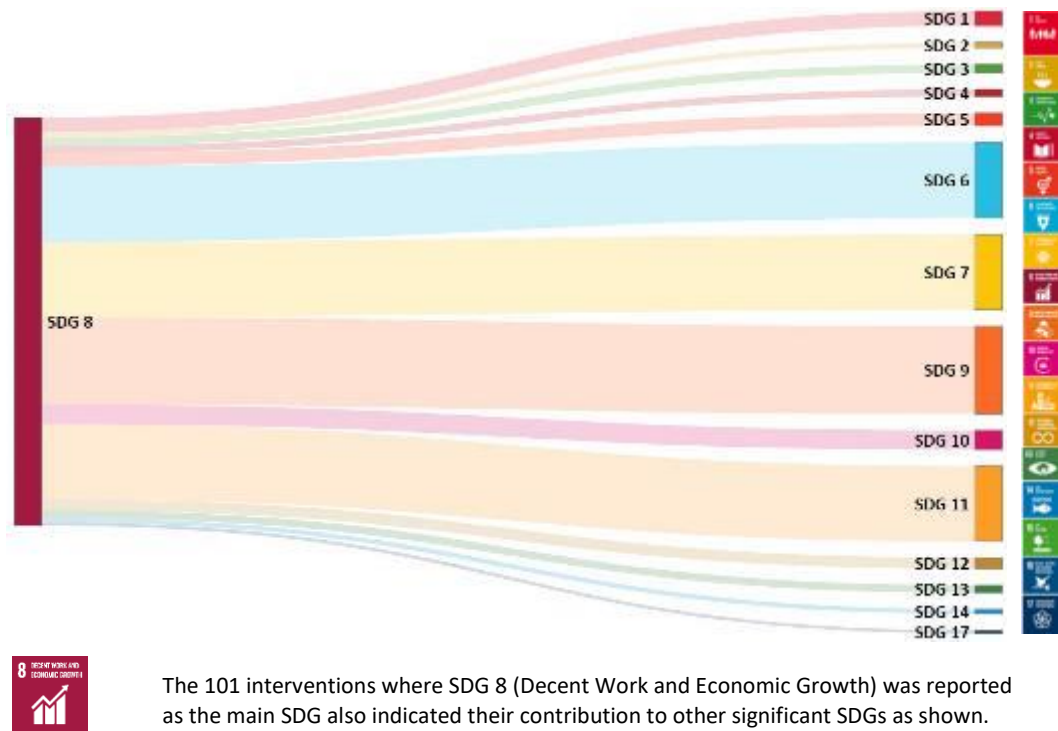
The intervention aimed to improve the business environment of the clean cooking sector using public-private dialogue to develop business environment reform proposals. The TA proposed recommendations for reforms to the Inter-ministerial Committee on Clean Cooking (IMC) chaired by the Ministry of Energy and the Climate Change, Health and Energy Working Group (TWG) also chaired by the Ministry of Energy.

Results

1. Identification of gaps within existing PPD mechanism. The TA's recommendations have been adopted by the leadership of these PPD mechanisms.
2. The CCAK secretariat now has the capacity to diagnose, implement, influence and design their PPDs effectively.
3. The CCAK secretariat is developing a follow-up strategy for the implementation of the decisions made at each PPD meeting.
4. A technical analysis produced by the ICR Facility is being used by the CCAK to support advocacy for policy reforms in the clean cooking sector in Kenya.

EU actions to contribute to decent work and economic growth are often directly associated not only to the pursuit of SDG 8 but also to a broader range of SDGs, given the interlinkages between SDGs (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: SDG 8 – Interlinkages with other SDGs



The 101 interventions where SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) was reported as the main SDG also indicated their contribution to other significant SDGs as shown.

SDG #17 Partnerships for the Goals

In January 2021, the European Commission’s department for Development Cooperation became the department for International Partnerships. This reflected the sense that the traditional aid narrative was no longer appropriate in the midst of climate change, growing inequalities and shifting geopolitical dynamics. The move simultaneously underlined that successful sustainable development requires partnerships, particularly with partner governments, but also with the private sector, civil society, multilaterals, and financial institutions. The Commission also made working together with Member States and others as ‘Team Europe’⁷⁰ the key approach in EU external relations to achieve greater impact and improve fostering partnerships of equals with countries around the world – from Africa to Asia, and from Latin America to the Middle East.

The EU and its 27 Member States collectively remain the largest provider of official development assistance (ODA) with EUR 70.2 billion⁷¹ in 2021 (up from EUR 67.3 billion in 2020), accounting for 43 % of global ODA⁷² (0.49 % of gross national income (GNI), down from 0.50 % in 2020⁷³). Latest

⁷⁰ Team Europe refers to cooperation between the EU, its Member States, their diplomatic network, finance institutions including national development banks, and implementing agencies, as well as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

⁷¹ Based on preliminary 2021 data from OECD, published in spring 2022.

⁷² Global ODA is defined here as including the ODA reported by the EU collective and all other donor countries.

⁷³ This ratio slightly decreased as the nominal increase of ODA was not commensurate with the high nominal increase of GNI due to the economic recovery.

available figures show that EU collective ODA to least developed countries (LDCs) amounted to EUR 16.3 billion in 2020, corresponding to 0.12 % of collective GNI⁷⁴.

The EU reconfirmed its support to the Addis Tax Initiatives by formally endorsing the declaration 2025. Building on the original declaration, the new initiative raises the level of ambition, bringing in priorities such as inequalities, green and digital transition, combatting illicit financial flows and accountability of stakeholders' participation, while taking forward the quantitative target. In response to these political commitments, the EU has steadily increased its support to DRM since 2015, becoming the biggest grant provider of DRM support in 2018 and 2019. In 2019, the Commission already exceeded the 2020 target, reaching EUR 100 million both in DRM commitments and payments. The positive trend anticipated for 2020 was temporarily halted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. The EU's swift mobilisation of funds to provide partner countries with liquidities resulted into a reduction of the support to DRM in 2020. As a consequence, EU support to DRM in 2020 was EUR 68.7 million in commitments and EUR 58.6 million in disbursements, respectively.

Amongst other debt facilities, the EU was the second largest contributor to the World Bank's Debt Relief Trust Fund (DRTF) in 2020-21, which is a key facility to manage debt sustainability for the poorest countries. The EU also disbursed SDR 141 million (EUR 183 million) to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) to provide debt relief and sustainable investment for the SDGs as part of the Team Europe Global Recovery initiative. This is part of the EUR 183 million contribution announced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crisis, which made the EU the largest donor to CCRT.

In early 2021, the Commission published its Communication '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'⁷⁵ committing to building strong international digital partnerships. This is complemented by the Digital 4 Development (D4D) Hub, a strategic multi-stakeholder platform that fosters digital cooperation between the EU, EU Members States and global partners. D4D saw its first operational regional component start its activities in 2021 with the African Union.

⁷⁴ This includes EUR 897 million of regional ODA known to benefit LDCs, a new element introduced in OECD-DAC methodology for 2020 data. In 2019, without this element, the EU aggregate ODA to LDCs stood at EUR 19.0 billion (0.12 % of GNI), including the UK which was still a Member State at the time; without the UK, it would have stood at EUR 13.8 billion (0.10 % of GNI).

⁷⁵ [COM\(2021\) 118 final of 9 March 2021](#).

Selected results 2018-2021⁷⁶

560 000 jobs were supported or sustained by the EU.

121 countries were supported by the EU to strengthen investment climate.

792 000 firms had access to financial services with EU support.

2 622 000 individuals had access to financial services with EU support.

33 000 quality schemes were adopted by economic operators with EU support.

1 969 000 people have benefited from institution- or workplace-based VET/skills development interventions supported by the EU – including 223 000 supported through EU Trust Fund for Africa projects.

160 countries were supported by the EU to strengthen revenue mobilisation, public financial management and/or budget transparency.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁷⁷

- A third of the jobs directly created or sustained with the support of the EU were located in the Sub-Saharan Africa (i.e. South Africa, Ethiopia, Somalia, etc.), and a tenth took place in the energy sector.
- The Promoting Inclusive Economic Growth in Egypt programme aims to strengthen the capacities of the private sector and civil society to deliver support services to MSMEs engaged in innovative and creative economic activities, including in cultural tourism projects. One of the projects in this programme, ‘Visit Badrashin! A responsible tourism strategy for an inclusive and innovative rural economy’, is supporting the development of a hub to deliver Business Development Services in a rural area with high unemployment and high tourism potential. So far, the project has directly created 250 jobs.
- The EU supported financial inclusion in 60 countries, assisting micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs) and individuals to access financial products (i.e., credit, insurance, leasing, etc.), with blending operations being the most common instrument used by firms to access.
- Central America and the Caribbean registers the largest results figure in skills development through vocational education and training (VET) programmes. In the Dominican Republic, 662 000 individuals have obtained a vocational qualification with the public national institute of professional formation.

Table 3: EU RF indicators disaggregated by sex

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|--|-----------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| Number of beneficiaries with access to | 2 622 000 | 307 000 | 660 000 | 1 655 000 |

⁷⁶ 2018-2020 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by INTPA and NEAR (ENI) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for EU RF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁷⁷ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|---|-----------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| financial services with EU support: b) individuals | | | | |
| Number of people who have benefited from institution- or workplace-based VET/skills development interventions supported by the EU | 1 969 000 | 883 000 | 751 000 | 335 000 |

Selected results 2018-2021 for the Enlargement region⁷⁸

1 835 072 jobs were supported or sustained by the EU.

20 public policies to strengthen investment climate were supported by the EU.

1 082 535 firms had access to financial services with EU support.

23 public policies to strengthen revenue mobilisation, public financial management and/or budget transparency were supported by the EU to strengthen investment climate.

Source: IPA Performance Framework indicators⁷⁹

3.5. Migration

Main achievements

With migration and forced displacement continuously high on the EU policy agenda, much attention in 2021 focused on the implementation of the external dimension of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Events in Afghanistan and Belarus, but also protracted displacement situations and continued irregular and unsafe migration flows in the EU Neighbourhood region, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Middle East and in the Americas demonstrated the importance of implementing the Pact. Continued COVID-19-related travel restrictions also further exacerbated the challenging situation for many migrants and forcibly displaced persons during the year.

Against this backdrop, the EU stepped up its engagement with partner regions and countries, with a particular focus on the Southern Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, to forge comprehensive migration partnerships, including tailor made action plans, addressing challenges and priorities of each side supported by increased political dialogue and high-level outreach. The political engagement was complemented by increased efforts, including funding, to provide substantive support addressing all aspects of migration and forced displacement. In addition, a very significant part of the EU's humanitarian budget in 2021 was allocated to projects addressing the needs of forcibly displaced persons and their host communities. This financial support was channelled through

⁷⁸ 2018-2020 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by NEAR (IPA) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for IPA PF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁷⁹ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (IPA). Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

organisations dealing with refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and host communities on the ground. About 35 % of the EU's humanitarian budget reached forcibly displaced persons in the form of cash transfers⁸⁰.

In the **Neighbourhood region**, effective migration management in cooperation with partner countries was supported with actions covering all aspects of the EU's external dimension of migration policies including all priorities of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. Programmes have been adapted to support migrants, refugees, the forcibly displaced and host communities in the context of the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout 2021, the **EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis** (EUTF Syria) remained a major EU tool to address the vital needs of Syrian refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries, already reaching more than 8.4 million people. A strategic support package of EUR 5.7 billion was agreed in 2021 for refugees and host communities in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. To cover needs in **North Africa** previously funded under EUTF Africa, a **new multi-country programme on migration**, is under preparation. For 2021, individual measures amounting to EUR 165 million were approved under NDICI-Global Europe in line with the four priority areas foreseen in this new programme: protection and basic service delivery to vulnerable migrants and refugees in Libya; support to border management institutions in Tunisia and Libya; return and reintegration; and labour migration. Cooperation on migration and integrated border management is a specific objective in the regional **multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for the Eastern Neighbourhood 2021-2027** that was adopted in December 2021 alongside the MIPs for Ukraine and Armenia, in which migration is also one of the priorities. The political exploitation of migrants in Belarus called for responses including increased assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) support via an ongoing action with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

In the **Western Balkans**, the regional support to protection-sensitive migration management phase II ended in December 2021. The programme, implemented jointly by Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continued to build capacities in all areas of migration management. The first IPA III funded programmes were adopted in December 2021.

In **Sub-Saharan Africa**, international mobility resumed in 2021, following the lifting of certain COVID-19 related travel restrictions. However, the increase in the number of health-related measures, as well as the fluctuating spread and detection of COVID-19, continued to have an impact on migration and mobility. Six years after its establishment, the EUTF for Africa continued fostering stability as well as addressing migration and forced displacement challenges and opportunities, including their root causes, in close cooperation with African partners. In 2021, the EUTF for Africa consolidated its achievements with the approval of four new actions and 34 budgetary top-ups for a total of EUR 242.6 million. This brings the total amount of approved programmes to EUR 4 935.1 million.

⁸⁰ The objective of EU humanitarian aid is to provide assistance, relief and protection to victims of natural and man-made disasters outside the EU to meet the needs arising thereof. It is provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality and Independence. Over the years, forcibly displaced (refugees and internally displaced people) and sometimes also migrants caught in humanitarian crises have benefited from EU's support to cover their needs. EU humanitarian aid is not a migration management tool and as such, is not subject to any conditionality or used as a leverage tool.

In 2021 in Sub-Saharan Africa the new NDICI-Global Europe fund started to finance measures in the area of migration and forced displacement. The regional MIP adopted at the end of 2021 for this region included a specific provision of EUR 1 600 million for migration and forced displacement matters, to be committed over the period 2021-27. Under this regional MIP, three measures were already adopted at the end of 2021, for an overall amount of EUR 234 million, two of them addressing, in partnership with UNHCR, the forced displacement challenges of the region, and the third one aiming to continue the Joint Initiative on Migrant Protection and Reintegration, implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Several other actions under the NDICI-Global Europe country MIPs were adopted in 2021 contributing to address the mixed migration flows from and within Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria and Ivory Coast, while an action to support in Sudan the refugees fleeing the Tigray region was adopted under the 'rapid response pillar' of the NDICI-Global Europe fund.

Within Asia, highlights in 2021 were the approval of the regional MIP for Asia-Pacific, where migration and forced displacement feature as a priority area with an allocation of EUR 422 million over the period until 2027. This will support and complement actions to be approved at country level.

Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan are considered as priority countries for migration partnerships. EU development cooperation in these countries has included a strategic focus on sectors that provide a balanced approach, targeting poverty and inclusive growth, thereby addressing root causes of fragility and migration. Examples are job creation through private sector development, income generation, community development projects and technical and VET programmes.

In Afghanistan, the Commission is addressing the root causes of migration and forced displacement through its support to basic needs and its response to the effects of internal and regional forced displacement, without recognising or legitimising the de facto authorities.

To that end, under the NDICI-Global Europe fund, a package of special measures for the Afghan regional displacement situation (EUR 79 million) was fast-tracked for adoption at the end of 2021.

Forced displacement situations were addressed also in other parts of Asia. For instance, at the end of 2021, was adopted under the country MIP of Iraq an action (EUR 75 million) to support this country in promoting the social and professional inclusion of its internal displaced people as well as of the Syrian refugees hosted on its territory. In addition, under the regional MIP and the 'rapid response pillar' of the NDICI-Global Europe fund, programmes in Myanmar and Thailand were adapted and approved to take account of the evolving situation in Myanmar in 2021.

In the **Americas**, the highlight in 2021 was the third conference on the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis, which was hosted in June 2021 by Canada with the support of the EU. The latter pledged at the conference EUR 147 million in grants. As an immediate follow up to this, a new EUR 15 million action supporting Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Peru, Colombia and Ecuador was adopted by the Commission under the 'rapid response pillar' of the NDICI-Global Europe fund.

At the end of 2021 the NDICI-Global Europe regional multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for the Americas was adopted. This document identifies migration and forced displacement as one of the EU's objectives in the region, without however setting a specific budget allocation for the actions in this area. The regional MIP is expected to primarily focus its contribution on addressing the impact of the Venezuelan displacement situation in the neighbouring countries in South America,

while possibly intervening also in displacement situations in Central America and the Caribbean region. The regional MIP should be complemented, when feasible and appropriate, by actions at national level to be funded by country MIPs.

The result of the **NDICI-Global Europe programming process** undertaken in 2021 resulted in notable achievements in ensuring the indicative at least 10 % migration and forced displacement spending target should be met across geographical and thematic multi-annual indicative programmes, with relevant migration and forced displacement considerations adequately integrated in a context specific and tailor-made manner. The inclusion of migration and forced displacement elements into both the political level dialogues and the programming framework was crucial to equip the Commission with adequate tools to contribute to the implementation of the EU's policy priorities in the area of migration, complementing other relevant EU tools as well as those of EU Member States.

On 3 December 2021 the Commission convened the first meeting of the 'Coordination Group on Migration under the NDICI-Global Europe and Member States' bilateral funds'. The Commission and EEAS established this informal group with the objective to facilitate the exchange of information with and among the EU Member States on the projects being respectively planned in the areas of migration and forced displacement, so as to ensure a better coordination and synergy, and a consistent application of the 'Team Europe' approach.

SDG #10.7 Reduced Inequalities

Migration and forced displacement are global phenomena that affect all countries and can result in both opportunities and challenges for countries involved, as well as the migrants themselves. While most migration journeys take place in a regular and orderly way, irregular and unsafe migration paths often put migrants and displaced people in vulnerable situations with high risks for exploitation, abuse and exclusion. Cooperation on migration and forced displacement is therefore an integral part of **our relations and our cooperation with partner countries**. Addressing the root causes of irregular and unsafe migration, combatting migrant smuggling and the trafficking in human beings, supporting refugees and other displaced people, as well as their host communities in third countries and facilitating well-managed and legal migration is critical to achieve the SDGs in relation to inequality. Hence, in line with SDG target 10.7 on facilitating **orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people**, the EU implements a comprehensive and balanced partnership approach, providing tailor made and context specific support to partner countries to address migration and forced displacement challenges.

To achieve this goal, the causes and consequences of inequality must be understood, which can be complex and deeply rooted in social, economic, political and environmental systems and resources.

Selected results 2018-2021^{81,82}

20 430 000 migrants, forcibly displaced people or individuals from host communities were protected or assisted with EU support – including 560 000 supported through EU Trust Fund for Africa projects.

81 migration management or forced displacement strategies or policies were developed/ revised with EU support and **65** migration management or forced displacement strategies or policies were implemented with EU support

- including three supported through EU Trust Fund for Africa projects.

- Examples of protection measures or assistance for migrants, forcibly displaced people, or individuals from host communities include support in the areas of medical services and psycho-social assistance, access to basic services, skills development, and legal assistance.
- Projects providing protection or assistance reached people in 70 countries, including 487 000 persons in North Africa, 5 400 000 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 12 200 000 in Middle East Asia and 2 000 000 in South & Central Asia.

Table 4: EU RF indicator disaggregated by sex

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|--|------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Number of migrants, forcibly displaced people or individuals from host communities protected or assisted with EU support | 20 430 000 | 4 702 000 | 5 240 000 | 10 488 000 |

Selected results 2018-2021 for the Enlargement region⁸³

11 public policies of migration management and/or forced displacement were supported by the EU.

4 EU funded interventions supported by the EU report improvement of compliance of Border and Security Systems with EU / Schengen Acquis.

Source: IPA Performance Framework indicators⁸⁴

⁸¹ Provisional numbers, will be subject revision.

⁸² 2018-2021 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by INTPA and NEAR (ENI) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for EU RF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁸³ 2018-2020 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by NEAR (IPA) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for IPA PF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁸⁴ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (IPA). Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

3.6. Governance, Peace and Security

Main achievements

Programming of support to human rights and democracy under Global Europe was completed in 2021. The vast majority of partner countries will have programmes addressing democratic governance, and benefit from a range of new global initiatives on participation and independent media. In addition, in the Delegated Act supplementing the new NDICI-Global Europe instrument, geographic programmes have a thematic target of at least 15 % for human rights, democracy and good governance. A majority of partner countries will also have programmes to strengthen their justice systems, aiming at long-term, sustainable solutions to systemic issues. The accessibility and effectiveness of key justice institutions, as well as the digitalisation of justice systems, will be a particular focus.

The EU has also launched its Team Europe Democracy initiative providing a platform to better coordinate actions between EU Member States and enhance support to rule of law, accountability and governance projects in partner countries around the world. Specific support to transparency and accountability also saw the launch of the EUR 5 million SANCUS programme with Transparency International supporting civil society to drive systemic change in 16 countries over 36 months. Support also continued to the 'Global Monitor of COVID-19's Impact on Democracy and Human Rights' a 'one-stop' online global monitoring platform, implemented by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), with data and brief analysis by country for 165 countries around the world.

Civil Society and Local Authorities

In 2021, EU engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) remained strong through strengthened dialogue, partnerships with global and regional CSO networks and substantial support. CSOs continued to provide a significant contribution to enhancing communities' resilience in the context of COVID-19, supporting marginalised vulnerable groups, monitoring and reacting to changes in the enabling environment.

The year 2021 saw the adoption of the 2021-2027 multiannual indicative programme (MIP) and 2021-2024 multiannual action plan (MAAP) of the new Civil Society Thematic programme under the NDICI-Global Europe Instrument. Promoting an enabling environment for CSOs in a context of a closing civil space remains a key goal of the new, EUR 1.5 billion programme. Other, closely interlinked overarching objectives are the strengthening of CSOs capacities to perform their roles as actors of democratic governance and development as well as the participation of CSOs in policy processes at all levels. At least 75 % of the resources allocated to the programme will be spent on actions in partner countries.

Efforts to ensure civil society participation in the design of EU policy and programmes were intensified in EU Delegations. The focus on women and youth was consistently implemented in dialogues with civil society. CSOs engaged on gender and women issues and youth organisations were systematically included in consultations held at country level. At global level, the Policy Forum on Development organised ten virtual consultations, ensuring civil society and local authorities' input and recommendations on regional and thematic programmes including a dedicated event on the implementation of the third EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III).

As public actors closest to the citizens, local and regional governments (LRGs) are in a unique place to reply to most of the pressing challenges being faced today and that will characterise the world of tomorrow. In 2021 the EU renewed its support to global and regional associations (UCLG, UCLG Africa, AIMF, CEMR/Platforma, and CLGF) and launched 15 new city-to-city partnerships, adding to the 42 partnerships already underway under the 'Local authorities: partnerships for sustainable cities' programme.

Jointly with the European Committee of the Regions, the Commission organised in November 2021 the seventh International Forum 'Cities and Regions for International Partnerships' focusing on two key themes: 'Sustainable and Green Recovery' and 'Participatory Citizenship and Good Governance'. The Forum gathered participants from more than 80 countries and provided a unique opportunity for dialogue and fostering cooperation among local and regional authorities from the EU and its partner countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Inclusion of local authorities in geographic programmes made satisfactory progress, with local authorities to be directly supported under 37 country MIPs; on track to achieve minimum spending of EUR 500 million as stated in the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation⁸⁵.

The Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme continued to support the wider understanding of development policy among the European public.

Conflict prevention, sustaining peace and building resilience

The resurgence of conflicts, including in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, reminded us how crucial it is to continue to engage with partners in building conflict-free, democratic, secure and resilient societies; and the importance of having a robust and effective EU toolbox on conflict prevention, crisis management and response.

The coherence of actions related to resilience and peace is ensured through shared analysis of the root causes and drivers of fragility and crisis and improved conflict sensitivity of our interventions. A more systematic approach to implement conflict analysis screenings (CAS) and conflict sensitivity assessments at the time of programming and at all stages of the intervention cycle is being applied.

The Commission ensured the co-ordination and implementation of CAS processes and methodologies, by preparing and facilitating inter-service workshops (mostly virtual) and joint missions to EU Delegations. Support to delegations, guidance and tools are being provided, and a monitoring should ensure the implementation of recommendations generated by respective CAS exercises throughout the different phases of the intervention cycle.

Similarly, the implementation of the Structural Country Assessments in 2021 by the Commission services and the EEAS facilitated the dissemination of the risk analysis methodology among EU Delegations, EU Member States and other EU actors, ensuring the implementation and monitoring of Conflict Prevention options for action.

In 2021 a second workshop on the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus was organised to discuss challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the HDP nexus. It took stock of the

⁸⁵ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009.

progress made in the six pilot countries (Chad, Iraq, Myanmar, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria) and improvements in operational implementation methods for the nexus.

Fight against terrorism and organised crime

Terrorism continued to be a challenge for the EU and its neighbourhood in 2021. Terrorist threats became more complex due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased use of on-line communication and digital means. The **EU Counterterrorism Agenda** adopted in December 2020 stipulates the importance of reinforcing international cooperation across the four pillars of the agenda (anticipate, prevent, protect, and respond). The prevention of radicalisation (including on-line radicalisation) remains an important strand of the EU's action in the neighbourhood. On the law enforcement side, the implementation of EU regional projects continued, for instance, the Sharaka project led to a wide application of International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) systems in countries in the Southern Neighbourhood. The EU Global Facility on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) remained a key tool to assist partners in complying with international standards on AML/CFT.

Equally, organised crime groups continued to pose a threat to both the EU and its neighbourhood. Organised crime operations developed and adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example through an increase in fraud and counterfeiting of medical products and on-line crime. In April 2021, the Commission presented a **new strategy to tackle organised crime** for the period 2021-2025. In the Southern Neighbourhood, within the framework of the EuroMed Justice programme, Southern Neighbourhood countries contributed to the preparation of an action plan on judicial cooperation for countering trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. Another action plan was produced on confiscation of crime proceeds and asset recovery.

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) framework, a regional programme on the fight against organised crime is being implemented in partnership with CEPOL, Europol and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNCRI). This aims at strengthening strategic and operational police cooperation between the region, the EU and its Member States. Support is also being provided to increase the capacity of the EaP partners to trace, freeze, seize, confiscate and recover assets linked to criminal activities.

Cooperation under the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (**EMPACT**) - the flagship EU instrument for cooperation in the fight against organised and serious international crime - continued with a reinforced commitment from several third countries to engage in activities of the new cycle 2022-2025. With the above-mentioned EU strategy to tackle organised crime in place, work accelerated on strengthening the external dimension of EMPACT through the establishment of SOCTA⁸⁶-type threat assessments in neighbouring countries.

The cyber landscape has continued to evolve. Dependencies on technologies have further increased, as have vulnerabilities to cyber (facilitated) criminality. Through the EU funded regional CyberEast programme, capacity building and technical assistance support continues to be provided to the EaP partners on cybersecurity and cybercrime. The programme supports bringing the partners' institutional and legal frameworks closer to EU cybersecurity standards and implementing the Council of Europe Convention on cybercrime (the Budapest Convention).

⁸⁶ Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment.

In 2021, **security and Security Sector Reform (SSR)** were integrated in the Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention Thematic programme and geographic programmes.

Priority actions and activities in 2021 contributed to building a stronger Europe in the world by promoting an integrated approach to Security Sector Reform (SSR), including Capacity Building in support of Security for Development (CBSD), as well as providing support and expertise to the strengthening of the entire criminal justice chain in partner countries.

Security and Security Sector Reform, Organised Crime, Anti-Money Laundering and Financial Crimes have been considered as priority sectors for intervention in several national and regional multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) across all geographical areas. Across regions, the EU assisted partners in the design and implementation of reforms in the fields of good governance, rule of law and the judiciary, public safety and the rule of law, border management and counterterrorism. The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed down the engagement in Security Sector Reforms (SSR), although the demand for greater accountability and advancement in reforms remained high.

SDG #16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

Following the adoption of the NDICI-Global Europe, joint analytical tools and methodologies are being implemented in an inter-service process more systematically, notably through conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessments as key inputs to the programming exercise. The implementation of EU Structural Country Assessments (SCA) is continuing in a complementary fashion. The NDICI-Global Europe holistically included several requirements and provisions on conflict sensitivity and resilience, including a mandatory requirement for conflict analysis for all fragile and conflict-affected countries, to ensure conflict sensitive programming based on a Do-No-Harm approach.

A total of 16 (plus four in Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries: Lebanon, Moldova, Ukraine, West Bank/Gaza and Georgia) joint conflict analysis screenings were undertaken in 2021, in compliance with the NDICI-Global Europe requirements, as well as four (plus one in a Neighbourhood and Enlargement country) EU Structural Country Assessments, three conflict sensitivity trainings in English and French, and one tailored for a EU delegation in Spanish, and several presentations related to this topic. In addition, twelve Conflict Sensitivity Guidance Notes were published on the relevant policy frameworks, methodologies, and sectoral and thematic approaches. A training with interactive workshops on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus was held with EU delegations from pilot countries and two resilience assessments were carried out with two delegations in African countries.

With regard to peacebuilding related EU policies associated with Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), 2021 saw the adoption in December of the EU Joint Communication on DDR⁸⁷. Building on the 2006 DDR concept and considering lessons learned from the international community, the EU Joint Communication on DDR provides an updated EU understanding of the DDR concept and approaches against the backdrop of a changing conflict and fragility landscape, building on the experiences and developments in the field, as well as aligning with the UN DDR standards. It also strengthens links with other key policies, such as Security Sector Reform, Transitional justice, etc. and builds on provisions aiming at conflict sensitivity, 'do no harm' and 'leaving no one behind' principles.

⁸⁷ [JOIN\(2021\) 35 final of 21 December 2021](#)

With regards to resilience, peace and security, a total of 42 countries included security/Security Sector Reform (SSR) as a priority in their national MIPs, 26 countries included resilience and 29 countries included peace. Moreover, under the new Team Europe initiatives (TEI) in which Member States participate together with the EU to enable a major impact on selected priorities, there were at the end of 2021 more than 20 initiatives focused on security aspects proposed for co-funding, 60 on resilience and 15 on peace.

Selected results 2018-2021

56 countries were supported by the EU to conduct elections and/or improve their electoral process.
1 600 government policies were developed or revised with CSO participation through EU support.
129 000 victims of human rights violations directly benefited from assistance funded by the EU.
5 831 000 people directly benefited from legal aid interventions supported by the EU.
968 000 individuals directly benefited from EU-supported interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict peacebuilding and/or conflict prevention.
11 400 state institutions and non-state actors were supported on security, border management, countering violent extremism, conflict prevention, protection of civilian population and human rights – including 20 supported through EU Trust Fund for Africa projects.

Source: EU Results Framework indicators⁸⁸

- Nearly 130 000 victims of human rights violation directly benefited from assistance funded by the EU. Examples of support provided include medical and psychosocial support, legal support, material support, temporary relocation, protection against intimidation or risk of retaliation.
- In Tanzania, more than 2.8 million people – more than half of them women – benefited from legal aid education with EU support which was conducted by paralegals through village assemblies, religious places, markets, or door to door.
- The number of government policies developed or revised with civil society organisation (CSO) participation more than doubled since last year (from 730 to 1 600 policies). In Georgia, 39 policies were developed with CSO participation. In the context of the project ‘Improving the Agriculture Sector in Georgia’, CSOs were part of public consultations on the policy work developed by the project, including a strategy for agriculture and rural development, an agricultural extension strategy and a law on aquaculture.

Table 5: EU RF indicators disaggregated by sex

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/ girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Number of victims of human rights violations directly benefiting from assistance funded by the EU | 129 000 | 15 000 | 21 000 | 93 000 |
| Number of people directly benefiting from | 5 831 000 | 2 049 000 | 2 091 000 | 1 691 000 |

⁸⁸ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (ENI) and INTPA. Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

| EU Results Framework indicator | Total | women/ girls | men/boys | Not identified |
|--|---------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|
| legal aid interventions supported by the EU | | | | |
| Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU-supported interventions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict peacebuilding and/or conflict prevention | 968 000 | 169 000 | 153 000 | 646 000 |

Selected results 2018-2021 for the Enlargement region⁸⁹

153 electoral recommendations (of the International Election Observation missions (EOM) done by the OSCE/ODIHR or the EU EOM (case of Kosovo)) were followed up and/or implemented with EU support.

474 judges, prosecutors, lawyers and court staff strengthened their capacities on European standards and EU acquis with EU support.

7 countries adopted and/or implemented the legal framework for the protection, promotion and/or enforcement of human/fundamental rights (including freedom of expression and Media, freedom of assembly and freedom of association and non-discrimination and rights of minorities) with EU support.

53 public policies were developed and/or revised with internal and external consultations with EU support.

Source: IPA Performance Framework indicators⁹⁰

⁸⁹ 2018-2020 stands for the reporting year. The EU-funded interventions that contribute to this figure are ongoing or closed projects managed by NEAR (IPA) that started between January 2014 and July 2020. The values reported for IPA PF indicators are cumulative, including all results reported for these projects since start of implementation.

⁹⁰ Collecting results from EU-funded interventions managed by NEAR (IPA). Further information on scope and methodology in chapter 6.

4. Geographic Overview

4.1. Sub-Saharan Africa

4.1.1. Introduction (policy developments)

On 15 April 2021, the EU and the members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) initialed the draft agreement renewing their strong partnership, known as the ‘post-Cotonou’ Agreement. The Council was expected to adopt the decision on signature and provisional application of the Agreement on 21 December 2021. However, the adoption was postponed, and the transitional measures on the implementation of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement were extended until 30 June 2023⁹¹.

Due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and related travel and meeting restrictions, the EU-AU Summit, initially foreseen in 2021, was postponed. The EU kept up the momentum with important political and policy dialogues and a continued engagement with its African partners, as well as a diverse range of stakeholders (representatives from civil society, youth organisations, private sector, etc.) across both continents, to further discuss the short and long-term priorities at the heart of a renewed Africa-EU Partnership. During 2021, on the way to the Summit, numerous virtual consultations were organised with Commissioner Urpilainen in the lead and many other Commissioners participating.

Ahead of the sixth EU-AU Summit rescheduled for 17-18 February 2022, Ministers for foreign affairs met in Kigali in October 2021 to discuss the most important common priorities, opportunities and challenges for the agenda. Ministers outlined four key areas for future cooperation: the joint COVID-19 response; recovery: green and digital transitions; peace, security and governance; and migration and mobility.

The fourth AU–EU agricultural ministerial conference took place on 22 June 2021, co-hosted by the African Union Commission and the European Commission. The conference enabled AU and EU agriculture ministers to exchange views and share best practices on the development of more sustainable food systems, also in the context of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, West and Central Africa remained in the grip of the ongoing pandemic and has continued to face multiple crises. 31 million people were in food crisis between June and September, a 45 % increase compared to 2020. Growing insecurity had also led to massive population displacement; more than 8 million refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) are in 2021 living in West and Central Africa, of which 3.8 million were in the G5 Sahel countries. The security situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad sub-regions continued to deteriorate. Insecurity linked to the on-going conflict has moved from the Sahel towards the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea.

A wave of attempted and successful coups d’état in Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), Chad (April 2021), and Guinea (September 2021), often as a consequence of weak governance and increasing insecurity in the communities, also shocked the region.

In the light of the increasing threats and the widespread agreement that the security-focused approach did not achieve the expected results, a new EU integrated strategy for the Sahel was

⁹¹ Decision No 1/2022 of the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors of 21 June 2022 to amend Decision No 3/2019 of the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors to adopt transitional measures pursuant to Article 95(4) of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement [2022/1102]: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2022/1102/oj>

endorsed by the Council on 16 April 2021 putting in place a more comprehensive approach focused on strengthened governance, development and mutual accountability. A ‘civilian and political surge’ in line with the priorities of the Sahel Coalition was decided at the Ndjamena Summit in February 2021.

A new Horn of Africa strategy was also adopted on 10 May to deepen the EU strategic relationship with the region⁹².

While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to bring serious human and socio-economic consequences, **Eastern and Central African countries** experienced a challenging year in 2021, with a general deterioration in security, growing instability and a decline in respect for fundamental and democratic values. The Ethiopian and Sudanese crises had an impact on the programming processes and the implementation of EU programmes, as well as on the security and economy of other countries in the Horn of Africa. There have been some gains and setbacks in the conflicts affecting Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), but overall, there was no substantive progress.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to bring serious human and socio-economic impacts, with both political and rule of law implications as state capacity was severely restricted in many countries due to lockdown. The worst security threat in the region came in northern Mozambique, where the insurgency in Cabo Delgado Province continued and its humanitarian and security impact significantly worsened, with over half a million internally displaced persons by the end of 2021. In addition to the ongoing crisis in northern Mozambique, trafficking, illicit flows linked to wildlife and minerals, and the international drugs trade continued to exert a negative influence on the region.

Climate change continued to have a significant impact on the Southern Africa region, bringing further water shortages and related hydroelectric power supply load shedding. A positive development was elections in Zambia, representing an important achievement for the rule of law. In Lesotho, the EU continued to encourage implementation of the outcome of the national dialogue process. The EU reiterated its openness to review its policies towards Zimbabwe in the event of demonstrable progress in human rights and the rule of law, but expressed regret that such progress was not evident. The political situation in Eswatini has become challenging.

4.1.2. Working together towards the SDGs

In 2021, the EU pursued its support to reaching the SDGs in Africa, while socio-economic recovery continued to be hampered by the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with the **Green Deal** strategy of the Commission, boosting the green transition in our partner countries has been a common priority across the continent contributing to SDG 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 12, and 13. This support will also contribute to reaching the Global Europe spending target on climate and a significant contribution to the MFF spending target on biodiversity. It translated into specific programmes in various countries, such as biodiversity protection in Sierra Leone and Liberia, a landscape approach promoted in Burundi, and boosting land management sensitive to climate change in Cameroon and Congo.

⁹² [Council Conclusions 8135/21 of 10 May 2021](#).

Engagement with **youth** (increasingly important political drivers, as demonstrated for instance in the recent elections in Zambia), **women** (bearing in mind the low level of political representation of women and high Gender-Based Violence in some countries), **and civil society** (important for advocacy and as a vehicle for implementation in the few countries where assistance is not provided via government structures) has been key in the planning of future EU cooperation for the period 2021-2027. Regular consultations contributed to enhance EU support to SDG 5 and 16 in Africa. The strong involvement of women notably resulted in ambitious gender mainstreaming throughout programmes across the continent but also to dedicated interventions: empowering youth and women is, for example, the object of a dedicated sector in Kenya and Nigeria and inequalities and gender are a priority in DRC and Burkina Faso, thereby supporting SDG 5 and 10. Strengthening the role of youth has been identified as a cross-cutting issue in most countries of Western, Central and Eastern Africa and a priority area for Mali, Niger and Djibouti.

Furthermore, in the fragile contexts of **West, Central and Eastern Africa**, SDG 16 remained at the centre of the effort, with specific attention on **good governance, peace and security**. Investment was also made in human development through **health** (SDG 3, for example with dedicated programmes in Burundi, CAR and DRC) and **education** at all levels including technical and vocational training (SDG 4, with specific projects adopted in 2021 for Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Somalia, South Sudan). This contributed to the 20 % of ODA related social inclusion and human development spending target of Global Europe. SDG 11 on sustainable cities was also addressed, with programmes on Green Cities in Cameroon, Djibouti and Tanzania. Where appropriate, **migration** challenges were also addressed (SDG 1, 17).

In the **Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region**, as well as the Green Deal, decent jobs and economic growth including economic diversification (SDG 8) and education (SDG 4) have been at the centre of EU planned cooperation. As in other regions, for instance in Western, East and Central Africa with Congo and Tanzania, digital has been mainstreamed in most programmes and specific programmes support human centred digitalisation (SDG 8, 9).

In terms of SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in Sub-Saharan Africa. During the period 2014-2020 there were 12 000 short-term mobilities in both ways, 1 213 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to Sub-Saharan students, and 37 capacity-building projects and 4 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region.

The budget for Sub-Saharan Africa was multiplied by 3.5 times for 2021-2027. In 2021 though there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: only 1 Jean Monnet Module from Nigeria was selected, but there were also 3 full partners and 14 associated partners to Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters from Sub-Saharan Africa, while 285 students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships.

4.1.3. Implementation

At continental level, important progress has been achieved, thanks to the 2014-2020 Pan-African Instrument, in the operationalisation of the AU-EU D4D Hub, a powerful mechanism to advance the implementation of the digital agenda in Africa. The EU also supported the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, notably through the African Trade Observatory and the Harmonised System for the classification of products. Together with Member States, under a Team Europe initiative, an EU Technical Assistance Facility has been launched. In the

area of Science Technology and Innovation, the EU-AU partnership progressed on earth observation thanks to the achievements of the Copernicus (previously GMES - Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) programme, as well as the finalisation of an agreement with ASECNA (Agency for Air Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar) for the implementation of the Satellite-Based Augmentation System based on the European EGNOS technology.

With regards to the support to the private sector and investment climate, a Team Europe initiative (TEI) called 'TEI investing in young business in Africa' has been launched with support from nine Member States. The initiative focuses on supporting early-stage enterprises with business development services and access to finance. Its pilot implementation will take place in five partner countries.

In December 2021, the regional multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for Sub-Saharan Africa for the period from 2021 to 2027 was adopted for an amount of EUR 10.2 billion.

West Africa

In West Africa, under Global Europe, the EU adopted **17 country multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) for a total of EUR 4 156 million**, planning EU cooperation in the concerned countries until 2027. In Mali, Senegal, Ghana and Togo, those programming documents were joint with Member States, ensuring the full complementarity of all cooperation efforts. Overall, those translated into **12 annual action plans (AAPs) for a total of more than EUR 900 million of projects** adopted in 2021.

To work better together with Member States, the EU also designed a series of **Team Europe initiatives (TEIs)**, which will gather together collective efforts. Of the 34 prepared in West Africa, 32 focus on 'Governance, peace and security', 'Green Deal' and 'Growth and jobs'.

In Niger for example, the *Générations futures* TEI will help developing Niger's young human capital and offer hope and perspectives in terms of jobs through support to private sector development and investment. The TEI is supported by six Member States (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Spain) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). An indicative budget amounting to around EUR 770 million euros (of which EUR 246 million is from the EU) has been mapped for the implementation of the initiative.

The TEI sustainable cocoa aims at supporting the sustainable transformation of the cocoa value chain. Cocoa is the most important agriculture sector in Côte d'Ivoire and also the main driver for deforestation and forest degradation. By supporting sustainable agriculture practices and agroforestry, as well as forest protection and rehabilitation, this TEI will contribute to the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change. This initiative is particularly important because of the high level of convergence of EU-Cote d'Ivoire economic, environmental and political interests (i.e., cocoa represents 15 % of Ivorian GDP and EU imports 67 % of Ivorian cocoa).

At regional level, the migration TEI on the Atlantic/Western Mediterranean route, proposed by Spain earlier in the year, was further developed. It rallied significant support from the EU and seven Member States, nearing almost EUR 1 billion for the period 2021-2022. With the objective to ensure that migration to the EU from Maghreb, Sahel and West Africa countries is safe, regular and orderly, the initiative will mainly focus on migration management and migration governance actions putting migrants, refugees and their host communities first.

The regional TEI on vaccine manufacturing medicines and health technologies (MAV+) aims at reinforcing African pharmaceutical and manufacturing capacity across the whole continent. It will do this by focusing on production and manufacturing plants and creating the right ecosystem for investment and access. TEI funds have been mobilised in West Africa, for Senegal, and recently in Ghana.

Eastern and Central Africa

In Eastern and Central Africa, in addition to the ongoing implementation of substantial programmes under the 11th EDF, including those to support the recovery following COVID-19, EUR 3.97 billion of country multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) were adopted in 2021, covering the period until 2027. To start the implementation, 13 new annual action plans (AAPs) were approved for a total amount of EUR 946.5 million in 2021. Given the political and/or security situation in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea Equatorial and Sudan, no MIP and AAPs were proposed for adoption for these countries. Preparation of AAPs for Gabon and Sao Tomé e Príncipe started, but for adoption in 2022. Most AAPs focused on Green Transition, support to governance, peace and security, health and education.

Joint actions with Member States will be enhanced through 19 Team Europe initiatives (TEIs). Examples include the 'Alliance for sustainable development – a partnership for people, nature and green economy' in the DRC; the Congo TEI partnership for forests; the Kenya TEI green transition and the TEI sustainable business for Uganda (SB4U).

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

In the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region, 2021 represented a mix of implementation of ongoing actions and programming for the new multiannual financial framework (MFF). Few commitments to new programmes were made. The programming exercise was informed by the main challenges and opportunities which characterise the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region.

In 2021, the main challenges in the region from an EU policy perspective were: minimising the impact of COVID-19 (this region suffered most in Sub-Saharan Africa with a seven percentage point drop in GDP in 2020), including exacerbating existing problems such as accumulated debt; fighting climate change across the whole region; the violent insurgency taking place in northern Mozambique (Cabo Delgado), with direct impact on Mozambique's development trajectory and the risk of spill-over to neighbouring countries; the persistent failures of governance and rule of law in Zimbabwe and Comoros; and political instability in Eswatini and Lesotho.

The main opportunities lay in green growth, a priority in many countries; in investments in human development with emphasis on education, and in support to good governance to continue building institutions. Economic diplomacy has encouraged the broadening and deepening of Economic Partnership Agreements in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), as well as a useful discussion on the Review of the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) EPA on important subjects such as market access, business and investment climate. Finally, the EU Strategic Partnership with South Africa continued to deepen and evolve. To address these challenges and seize the opportunity, approximately EUR 2.2 billion of resources were allocated in the adopted country multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) for the period 2021-2027.

16 TEIs were launched to work more closely with Member States and achieve greater, joint impact. Examples include the E-Youth programme in Mozambique that aims to put youth at the centre stage of the country's transformation through support to their education, employment and empowerment.

The 'just and green recovery for South Africa' initiative will provide a visible and significant European contribution to tackling the country's socio-economic challenges, while enabling South Africa to progress towards climate-neutrality. This Strategic Partnership focuses on addressing common challenges such as climate change, reinforcing natural resources governance, and achieving the SDGs. In Zimbabwe, gender equality has been identified as a key area where the EU and Member States can bring added value and impact, building on existing achievements and focussing on the social, political and economic empowerment of women.

During 2021, the EU strengthened partnerships with members of the SADC EPA Group, notably Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa. National authorities prepared EPA implementation plans, on which basis specific tailored projects are being implemented with EU financial support. Angola continued internal SADC discussions in view of joining the EU-SADC EPA. Similarly, the ESA EPA group of countries, namely Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles and Zimbabwe, continued working with EU financial support to broaden and deepen the provisions of the EU-ESA EPA.

4.1.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

EASTERN AFRICA

Ethiopia

Throughout 2021 humanitarian needs in Ethiopia continued to increase across the country due to ongoing-armed conflict, intercommunal violence, natural hazards, and disease outbreaks including the impact of COVID-19. At the end of 2021, about 20 % of Ethiopia's population (20 million people) were estimated in need of emergency food assistance and over 5 million people were internally displaced due to conflict, floods and drought. Following three failed rainy seasons, the southern and south-eastern parts of the country were hit by a severe drought affecting over 6 million people. Ethiopia hosts over 800 000 refugees (the third largest refugee population in Africa) who rely on humanitarian assistance for survival. The conflict in Northern Ethiopia gave rise to massive humanitarian needs in Tigray, Afar and Amhara. In Tigray alone, 5.2 million people (91 % of the region's population) needed urgent food assistance. Despite a background of restricted access, 9.4 million people were targeted for humanitarian assistance in areas impacted by the northern conflict.

With EUR 85.5 million in humanitarian funding, the EU helped provide rapid, life-saving humanitarian responses to people affected by ongoing and continued conflict situations across the country; delivering assistance to refugees, returnees, asylum-seekers and deportees; and supported vulnerable people affected by natural hazards, including drought, floods, epidemic outbreaks and pests. This included the support given to people affected by the Northern Ethiopia conflict in Tigray, Afar and Amhara, as well as to Ethiopian Tigrayan refugees in Sudan.

South Sudan

In February 2020, South Sudan formed a transitional Government of national unity after six years of civil war. Yet progress in the implementation of the peace agreement has been slow and the security situation remained extremely fragile, compounded by lasting local ethnic conflicts, increasing youth mobilisation, widespread violence and serious human rights abuses against civilians. The humanitarian situation was catastrophic, with over 60 % of the population in need of humanitarian

aid and the worst food crisis since independence. Record floods and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 further exacerbated this dire situation.

In 2021, the European Union mobilised EUR 81.3 million for humanitarian actions covering the response to food insecurity, violence and floods across South Sudan. EU-funded projects provided humanitarian protection assistance to displaced people and those affected by trauma and widespread violence, in particular to children, women and girls given the extreme levels of violence and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The EU also continued to strongly support principled humanitarian assistance and advocate for the protection of humanitarian workers and their safe and sustained access to all parts of the country.

Sudan

2021 saw a major step back in the political transition process in Sudan with the military coup in October and the de facto suspension of the transition. The continued political gridlock in the aftermath of the coup led to a drastic reduction in the country's financial capacity to respond to growing needs, with potentially devastating consequences on the economy and people of Sudan. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance rose for the fifth year in a row to reach 14.3 million people (compared to 4.8 million in 2017) - one-third of the population.

In 2021, the EU mobilised EUR 65.04 million in humanitarian assistance to support the response to the various humanitarian crises in Sudan. Specific budget was mobilised to address the deteriorating food insecurity, to support the needs of the Ethiopian refugees fleeing the Tigray conflict, to respond to chronic displacements caused by insecurity for civilians in West Darfur, and to support the COVID-19 vaccination rollout. Between 2011 and 2021, the EU supported humanitarian action in Sudan with around EUR 669 million. The overall humanitarian response in Sudan continued to address the most critical needs in terms of food, shelter, emergency healthcare, access to clean water, education and protection assistance.

Somalia

In 2021, humanitarian needs remained high in Somalia due to conflict, continued erratic weather patterns and resulting severe drought due to several failed rainy seasons, the COVID-19 pandemic and desert locusts. At the end of 2021, over 3.2 million people were already affected by the extreme drought, and around 4.6 million people were expected to face food consumption gaps or depletion of livelihood assets (at crisis level). Over 169 000 persons have been displaced directly due to the drought effects, bringing the total number of displaced people in Somalia to almost 3 million persons. The majority of those that have abandoned their homes are living in overcrowded camps or urban areas, with limited access to basic services and dependant on humanitarian aid. In response, the Commission allocated over EUR 59.5 million to Somalia in 2021, including EUR 18.5 million allocated at the end of the year for emergency drought support.

Uganda

Uganda hosts the largest refugee population in Africa and the third largest in the world, mainly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU's support is crucial to providing life-saving humanitarian assistance to both refugees and host communities. Uganda is also vulnerable to natural hazards and epidemics and the EU is supporting the country's efforts to better anticipate and respond to these events. In 2021, the EU allocated EUR 35 million in humanitarian aid to Uganda, focusing on most immediate needs, including protection of new arrivals, water, sanitation hygiene

and shelter, education in emergencies, and disaster preparedness. Uganda being one of the six pilot countries for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, humanitarian interventions seek to build long-term developmental linkages in all targeted areas with the support of EU counterparts and to support the country's roll out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

Kenya

Kenya hosts over 540 000 refugees, with many more thousands awaiting registration. Furthermore, the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands in Kenya faced severe drought after three consecutive failed rainy seasons, which lead to food insecurity for about 2.8 million people, alarming levels of malnutrition especially among children under five years old, and an elevated risk of conflict over scarce pasture and water resources. Humanitarian funding for Kenya in 2021 amounted to EUR 18 million, including EUR 15 million for support to basic services in refugee camps, including COVID-19 vaccination rollout, and EUR 3 million in emergency response to the ongoing drought in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands areas.

Burundi

Humanitarian needs remained high in Burundi mainly linked to structural problems, high poverty rates and lack of access to basic social services. 2.3 million people – out of a population of 13 million – needed humanitarian assistance, with COVID-19 further aggravating the situation. Almost 116 000 Burundians were internally displaced, mainly due to natural disasters such as flooding, landslides and drought, and over 260 000 Burundian refugees remain in neighbouring countries. In 2021, the Commission provided EUR 12.8 million in humanitarian funding, including support to disaster preparedness and education in emergency projects.

WESTERN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Sahel countries

The Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon) are among the poorest and the most fragile in the world facing recurrent emergencies, in terms of food, nutrition and epidemics, and affected by increasing levels of violence and conflict. In 2021 the EU responded to emergency humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations in these countries, mobilising EUR 242.2 million to support multisectoral humanitarian interventions to the benefit of over 7 million vulnerable people across the region. The emergency response in conflict areas included support to rapid reaction mechanisms (a three-month multi sectorial emergency aid package) and to existing national structures to maintain access to basic services. Moreover, EU aid supported humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas through humanitarian air services, humanitarian civil-military coordination and security management.

In addition, as a response to the food and nutrition crisis induced by climatic conditions, poverty and insecurity that was compounded by the socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU provided food during the lean season and nutrition treatment for children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and in need of life-saving treatment. While addressing immediate humanitarian needs, the EU worked actively on implementing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to build the resilience of the affected population, reduce humanitarian needs and to address the root causes of food insecurity and acute undernutrition.

Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continued to face acute and complex humanitarian crisis in a context marked by persistent conflict in the east and increased violence in several other parts of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic affected economic growth while most Congolese were already living in extreme poverty. Structural problems remained, including limited access to basic services, insufficient public development, as well as deep gender inequalities. Armed conflict and epidemics, such as yellow fever, cholera, measles and Ebola, and COVID-19, as well as natural disasters, such as the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo and recurrent floods, continued to cause large-scale displacement (5.5 million internally displaced people in total) and serious protection concerns in the east. The country also continued to host refugees and asylum seekers mainly from the Central African Republic. With 27 million people without access to adequate food, DRC reported the highest food insecurity ever. The EU humanitarian funding for the DRC reached almost EUR 71 million in 2021 to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need. The funding also supported disaster preparedness action to strengthen the resilience of local populations and local authorities against natural disasters.

Central Africa Republic

The Central Africa Republic is suffering one of the world's most protracted crises. In 2021, 57 % of the population – some 2.8 million people out of 4.9 million - needed humanitarian assistance, with more than 1.4 million being displaced within the country or to neighbouring countries. Clashes among armed groups and national forces led to new violence and criminality throughout 2021, triggering further waves of displacement. COVID-19 aggravated the food insecurity in a country already affected by a high prevalence of acute malnutrition. Primary healthcare, water and sanitation, essential household items and shelter were among the most urgent needs, along with access to education, in a country where 50 % of the children could not attend school and some 1 000 schools could not operate due to the activities of armed groups.

In 2021, the EU provided humanitarian aid to crisis-affected populations in Central African Republic and to Central African refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad and Cameroon, for a total amount of EUR 22.5 million, focusing on the needs of the most affected populations, notably providing food assistance and livelihood support, health, shelter, water, sanitation, and education in emergencies, and reinforcing humanitarian coordination, security and logistics. In addition, the Commission financed actions to protect civilians, including prevention of sexual violence, support to victims, and actions offering a protective and educational environment for children at risk of forced recruitment, abuse and violence. EU-funded projects also helped respond to the health crisis caused by the pandemic, in particular by providing access to clean water and sanitation for vulnerable people.

Southern Africa and Indian Ocean

The Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region is prone to more frequent and intense natural disasters due to climate change and man-made hazards caused by conflict and violence, resulting in loss of lives and destruction of livelihood assets, leading to population displacement and millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2021, the EU allocated over EUR 52.5 million to the region, focusing on emergency relief response such as food/nutrition assistance, protection, access to healthcare, education in emergencies, water and sanitation and disaster preparedness. This funding included an envelope to address the acute levels of food insecurity in the region specifically in

Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. It also included support to the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Mozambique

The armed conflict in Cabo Delgado Province, Northern Mozambique further escalated in 2021 and, as a result of the violence, nearly 700 000 people were internally displaced and 1.3 million people were in need of emergency assistance and protection. The EU provided assistance to conflict-affected populations, including internally displaced people and their host communities, providing shelter, protection assistance, basic items to ease their daily life; functional water and sanitation systems; and education in emergencies. The EU also supported disaster preparedness actions in schools through safe learning facilities, training of teachers in early warning and teaching children how to stay safe. Building on lessons learned during the 2019 floods, continued support was provided on strategic emergency stock prepositioning, to facilitate and speed up the response to natural hazards. In 2021, the EU allocated EUR 17 million to Mozambique, of which EUR 16.5 million was for the Cabo Delgado crisis.

Madagascar

In Madagascar, more than 1.3 million people faced acute levels food insecurity and about 28 000 were at risk of famine. The EU support helped assist the most vulnerable families with adequate food assistance and nutrition services to children below the age of five. In addition, the EU continued its engagement in the sector of education in emergencies and disaster preparedness. The EU allocated EUR 12 million to respond mainly to the food insecurity and nutrition emergency needs.

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, 3.4 million people in rural areas and 2.4 million people in urban areas face high levels of acute food insecurity. The country also reported a steady influx of refugees from across Africa, hosting more than 20 000 refugees. In 2021, the EU allocated EUR 11 million in humanitarian assistance to mainly address the food shortages in the country and to support education in emergencies, disaster preparedness and the identification of the underlying, complex and interrelated causes of displacement.

Cameroon

During 2021 the EU continued discussions with Cameroon (Member of EU-Central African EPA) in view of completing the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement.

4.1.5. Crisis response and preparedness

With seventeen new crisis response actions related to **sub-Saharan Africa** launched in 2021 under the NDICI-Global Europe, the EU responded to the numerous crises in the region.

During the year, the conflict in **Tigray** was the focus of new actions in both **Ethiopia** and **Sudan**. Similarly, a crisis response action was set in motion to support stability in Darfur in connection with the scaling down of the joint AU-UN mission (UNAMID) in the region. In the **Central African Republic**, EU efforts to relaunch the peace process continued and were supplemented by actions focusing on human security, conflict prevention and stability. In response to violent conflict in the east of the country, a new NDICI-Global Europe crisis response action focusing on support to stability in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** was adopted in December 2021.

In the **Sahel**, several new crisis response actions were adopted to address the deteriorating situation in numerous countries in the region, including support for the UN-led 'civilian surge' in follow up to the February 2021 N'Djamena G5 Sahel Summit, as well as support to mediation and dialogue in **Chad**, to stabilisation and social cohesion in **Niger** and support to the transition to civilian rule in **Mali** following the 2020 coup (the latter being severely challenged by the May 2021 coup).

Furthermore, NDICI-Global Europe crisis response actions were mobilised to contribute to the promotion and protection of children's rights in the conflict affected region of **Cabo Delgado in Mozambique**. In **Cote d'Ivoire**, the EU supported youth leadership as well as social cohesion during the post-electoral transition process, while in **Kenya** efforts to reduce the risk of violence in connection with the forthcoming elections were supported. In **Senegal**, progress in the resolution of the Casamance conflict was supported as were efforts by Nigerian actors to protect civilians and to engage former combatants and associates of insurgent groups and reintegrate them into their communities. In **Somalia**, an innovative crisis response action focusing on reduction of climate-induced conflict and on climate sensitive reconciliation was adopted in December 2021.

The **European Union Capacity Building Mission – EUCAP Sahel Mali**, in close cooperation with the Malian authorities, aimed to restore and maintain constitutional and democratic order and the conditions for lasting peace. It also aims to restore and maintain State authority and legitimacy throughout the territory of Mali by means of an effective redeployment of its administration. EUCAP Sahel Mali also contributed to the improvement of interoperability and coordination between the internal security forces of Sahel G5 countries and the Malian Internal Security Forces. The Mission was launched in 2014 and has now been extended to 31 January 2023.

The **Regional Advisory and Coordination Cell (RACC)**, embedded within EUCAP SAHEL Mali and in close cooperation with existing CSDP Missions in the Sahel region, improved the cooperation and coordination between the G5 Sahel structures and G5 Sahel countries to enhance regional cooperation and operational capabilities in the field of defence and security.

The **EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Sahel's** mandate, now extended to 31 August 2022, contributed actively and gave priority to regional and international efforts to achieve lasting peace, security, stability and sustainable development in the region. Furthermore, the EUSR aimed to enhance the quality, impact and visibility of the EU's multi-faceted engagement in the Sahel in an integrated way.

The **European Union Capacity Building Mission – EUCAP Sahel Niger** enabled the Nigerien authorities to develop the necessary strategic frameworks, further operationalise existing strategies and contribute to the development of an integrated, multidisciplinary, coherent, sustainable and human-rights based approach among the various Nigerien security actors in the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The Mission also assisted the Nigerien central and local authorities and security forces in developing policies, techniques and procedures to effectively control and tackle irregular migration. The Mission was launched in 2012 and is now extended to 30 September 2022.

The **European Union Advisory Mission to Central African Republic – EUAM RCA** aims to support the establishment of rule-based governance and management capacities within the Ministry for Interior and Public Security of the Central African Republic, the sustainable transformation of the Central African Republic's Internal Security Forces and their operational effective functioning and deployment.

The **European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia – EUCAP Somalia** works to enhance Somali maritime civilian law enforcement. In particular to reinforce the Somali capacity to carry out fisheries' inspections and enforcement, ensure maritime search and rescue, counter smuggling, fight piracy and police the coastal zone on land and at sea.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the EU increased support to biosecurity in the region through the EU Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Centres of Excellence initiative, with actions focused on enhanced early detection of and preparedness for emerging viral diseases, a strengthened epidemiology response and enhanced capacity of public health laboratories to produce reliable test results and establish quality management systems.

4.2. Asia and the Pacific

4.2.1. East Asia and South Asia

4.2.1.1. Introduction (policy developments)

2021 saw the launch of the EU's new policy framework in relation to the region, the EU strategy for Cooperation on the Indo-Pacific, marking an increased engagement to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific for all while building strong and lasting partnerships. The strategy identifies seven priority areas: sustainable and inclusive prosperity; green transition; ocean governance; digital governance and partnerships; connectivity; security and defence; and human security.

In 2021, despite the continuing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU managed to maintain strong connections with key strategic partners. After two postponements, the 13th Summit of the **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM13)** took place virtually on 25-26 November in Phnom Penh, under the title 'Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth'. 45 Heads of State and Government discussed the two main themes of the Summit: 'ASEM's Role in promoting Multilateralism' and 'COVID-19 and Socio-Economic Recovery and Development'. They reached agreement on significant topics: post-COVID-19 recovery, multilateralism and connectivity. An **EU-Japan Summit** was held (by videoconference) marking the signature of a Green Alliance to protect the environment, fight climate change and achieve green growth. Taking stock of their deepening partnership, the **EU and Japan have increased security and defence cooperation** under the Strategic Partnership Agreement. In October, the EU's Operation Atalanta Combined Joint Task Force 465 and Japan held a trilateral naval exercise with Djiboutian forces in the Gulf of Aden and a joint port call in Djibouti. Such exercises follow the launch of the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which calls for increased joint activities to uphold maritime security in the region.

The EU further strengthened its strategic partnership with **South Korea** by enhanced security cooperation as well as significant progress towards a new digital partnership. The EU's Chief of Defence, General Graziano, visited South Korea for the first time with the aim of further intensifying military-to-military links. In December, the Commission adopted an adequacy decision ensuring safe data flows between the EU and South Korea.

The **EU-India Leaders' Meeting**, which took place in a hybrid format, endorsed the resumption of negotiations towards a Free Trade Agreement as well as the launch of negotiations on agreements on investment protection and geographical indicators. After eight years, India and the EU resumed their Human Rights Dialogue in April.

Throughout 2021, the EU's multi-faceted approach remained the basis for relations with **China**. Despite challenges, 2021 saw pragmatic and principled engagement remaining the cornerstone of the EU approach, notably in addressing global and regional challenges. For instance, China supported a successful COP26 in Glasgow and hosted the first part of the COP15 (biodiversity) in Kunming.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell and Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for the Green Deal, Frans Timmermans, visited **Indonesia** and **the ASEAN Secretariat** in 2021. During his visit, the HRVP and ASEAN Secretary General, Dato Lim Jock Hoi, and the ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives discussed how to further the EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership and address shared challenges.

The EU continued to work with **Thailand** on a Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA), while discussions on a Partnership Cooperation Agreement with **Malaysia** and negotiations with **Australia** and **New Zealand** on Free Trade Agreements advanced well.

In **Bangladesh**, the EU continued its engagement on the humanitarian challenge caused by the Rohingya crisis through advocacy and promotion of further support, as well as its work on strengthening compliance with labour and human rights in the framework of the Everything But Arms (EBA) unilateral trade preferences. At the biennial Diplomatic Consultations in Brussels in October, it was agreed to step up cooperation on climate action, digitalisation and connectivity. In **Sri Lanka**, the EU continued engaging with the authorities on human rights, reconciliation and justice reform. The EU Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) monitoring mission to the country reviewed the progress in implementing the international conventions applicable under this agreement. Sri Lanka also committed to reform the Prevention of Terrorism Act to bring it in line with international norms within a time bound process. In October 2021, an EU-**Nepal** Joint Commission took Place in Kathmandu.

The EU continued to promote peace and security in Asia and the Pacific in the difficult context of the takeover of **Afghanistan** by the Taliban in August 2021. The Council Conclusions on Afghanistan adopted by EU Foreign Ministers in September 2021⁹³ laid down the benchmarks of engagement with the de facto Taliban authorities and called for humanitarian access and safe passage, as well as inclusive governance. The EU continued to closely follow issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and especially women's rights, and sought to protect and support civil society, including Human Rights Defenders and Afghans at risk of reprisals. The President of the European Commission announced in October 2021 a support package in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, worth EUR 1 billion, channelled via UN agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The EU continued to implement the EU-Asia Connectivity strategy and contributed to the preparation of the Global Gateway Joint Communication⁹⁴. It signed a Connectivity Partnership with India in May. The EU also concluded negotiations on the Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA) with ASEAN countries. It advanced discussions on digital partnerships between the EU and Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

In February, following the staging of a military coup in **Myanmar/Burma**, the Council swiftly condemned the military junta. The EU imposed sanctions on the Tatmadaw that were prolonged in April and expanded throughout 2021. The EU has also provided financial assistance to support humanitarian and disaster preparedness in the country. In November, the EU deployed an Election Expert Mission for the general elections. In March, an EU-**Cambodia** Joint Committee took place. As discussed in the Joint Committee, the EU temporarily withdrew EBA trade preferences from Cambodia due to serious human rights concerns. However, the EU remains open to engage Phnom Penh on necessary reforms.

4.2.1.2. Working together towards the SDGs

Throughout Asia, the EU continued to promote environmental and human rights and due diligence/responsible business conduct (RBC) in supply chains through multilateral partnerships with

⁹³ [Council Conclusions 11713/2/21 of 15 September 2021](#).

⁹⁴ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 1 December 2021](#).

the ILO, UNDP and OECD and important EU's partner countries (**China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Mongolia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam**). Encouraging the uptake of international RBC and labour standards as well as other core conventions among policymakers and the private sector in Asia aims to level the playing field for businesses that integrate environmental and human rights considerations into their operations and supply chains (SDG 8 and SDG 12).

EU budget support in **Cambodia** also contributed to social protection, with the identification of 250 000 people living with disability thanks to a model developed under this programme. The model also helped to give access to COVID-19 vaccinations to those identified (SDG 1 and 3).

The EU is contributing to SDG 14 and 16 with a programme in the Fisheries sector in Cambodia. In 2021, 45 000 fishing operations were inspected at inland fisheries with 60 % of the fishing gear found to be illegal and 1 260 fishing vessels in marine fisheries were also inspected with 24 % of the fishing gear observed to be illegal. Increased patrolling has led to a reduction of illegal fishing activities, contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth in the fisheries sector.

In terms of SDG 4 (Quality education), under the Cambodia Education Budget Support programme funded by the EU, the percentage of five year olds accessing any form of preschool education increased around 10 percentage points, with the percentage of girls enrolled increasing to the same level as boys.

Furthermore, through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in East Asia and South Asia. During the period 2014-2020 there were 30 000 short-term mobilities in both ways, 3 384 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to Asian students, and 272 capacity-building projects and 57 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021 though there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: over EUR 350 000 have been awarded to the 6 Jean Monnet Modules, 5 Chairs and 1 Centers of Excellence selected from China, Korea, India, Mongolia, Singapore, and Taiwan. There were also 3 full partners and 29 associated partners to Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters from East and South Asia, while 796 students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships (with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in the top-5 of global recipients).

As for **Myanmar**, the coup d'état of 1 February 2021 brought a sudden halt to the democratic transition the country had engaged in over the last decade. In line with the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) Conclusions of February 2021, all development cooperation activities that could support or legitimise the military authorities were put on hold. After a careful review of the development assistance portfolio, the Commission moved to a 'back to basics' approach focused on supporting the people, civil society and the most vulnerable communities and thus minimising losses on achievements made towards the SDGs following the coup d'état.

The year 2021 marked the adoption of the Team Europe strategy (TES) 2021-2025 in **Laos**, a joint intervention strategy which replaces the multiannual indicative programme (MIP) and which fully takes into account the SDGs. In 2021 the EU Delegation in Laos supported the implementation of two important budget support programmes in the field of nutrition and education, which contributed to the achievement of SDG 2 and SDG 4. Thanks to EU budget support, Laos made important regulatory changes to protect and promote breastfeeding (SDG 2) and to raise the net primary school enrolment rate to 99 %, hence achieving universal access to primary education (SDG 4).

In **Indonesia**, the multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027 adopted in 2021 will be implemented through a Cooperation Facility which foresees, among other aspects, extensive dialogue on policy commitments to deliver the SDGs. More broadly, it is foreseen that all the activities implemented under the Cooperation Facility will be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

The SDGs are at the core of the EU-**Vietnam** partnership. In 2021, the EU Delegation continued to contribute to the implementation of SDGs both through implementation of programmes and policy dialogue, notably on sustainable energy and governance and rule of law as EU focal sectors for development cooperation. In that context, budget support programmes on energy are contributing to SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and SDG 13 (Climate action) and programmes like the Access to Justice and Legal Empowerment (EU JULE) are contributing to SDG 16 (Peace, security and strong institutions), together with additional thematic support channelled through civil society organisations (CSOs).

The EU-India Leaders' meeting resulted in the EU and **India** further reiterating their commitment to advance the implementation of the actions set out in the EU-India Roadmap 2025 and agreement to foster new synergies for jointly contributing to a safer, greener, cleaner, resilient and multi-polar world. In India, support to implementation of SDGs is at the core of the sustainable modernisation agenda funded by the EU. Two new actions focusing on air quality management and enhancing cooperation with the International Solar Alliance directly contributed to ensuring progress in the context of SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). Ongoing actions in the fields of renewable energy, resource efficiency, circular economy, sustainable urban development and health resilience also consolidated support to the implementation of SDGs 3, 7, 11, 13 and 17.

During 2021, extensive consultations took place with relevant stakeholders in preparation of the new EU-Vietnam multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027, which was formally adopted in December 2021. The Vietnam SDG action plan was taken as the strategic basis for the programming together with the new 2021-2030 Socio-economic Development strategy (SEDS) and the 2021-2025 Socio-Economic Development plan (SEDP).

Following a broad range of consultations, the new multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2021-2027 for the **Philippines** was adopted in 2021 focusing on continuing the long-term support in Mindanao, good governance, circular economy and digitalisation. Despite a challenging environment due to the pandemic, the EU maintained an effective dialogue with the Government and other stakeholders. The first Sub Committee on EU-Philippines Development Cooperation in April 2021 built on the current better relations with the Government and there was an exchange on opportunities for current and future cooperation.

The EU continued to work with Thailand and Malaysia on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Negotiations with Thailand and Malaysia advanced with the EU supporting bilateral policy dialogue in key areas of partnership under the PCA including trade, climate change, biodiversity, and security, through the EU-Malaysia PCA Facility.

The EU is a longstanding supporter of the Education sector (SDG 4) in **Bangladesh, Pakistan** and **Nepal**. In Bangladesh for example, the EU supports the Fourth Primary Education Development Programme of the Government contributing to substantial progress in enrolment and school attendance rates, reduced dropout rates and better survival rates to grade 5. In Nepal, the EU

supports the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) of the Government contributing to improved management and service delivery in the education sector.

In **Pakistan**, the first tranche of budget support (EUR 20 million) was disbursed by the end of 2021 in support of the Education sector in Sindh. This payment, which was also part of the COVID-19 crisis package, supports universal access to quality education in this province. The Financing Agreement supporting the second phase of the Education Support Programme in Balochistan was signed in 2020 and allowed the programme to start in April 2021 with a view to consolidate improvements in governance and management reached under the first phase of the programme.

In **Bangladesh**, the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) Local Government Initiative for Climate Change (LoGIC) established a mechanism to bring climate change financing to local government and community levels (SDG 13). EUR 6.7 million was added to the project.

Reduction of inequalities (SDG 10) is also at the heart of EU interventions. In Bangladesh, EU budget support has provided resources to support the Government's food, nutrition and cash transfers programmes for poor and vulnerable households, with a view to reducing poverty and eliminating malnutrition. The EU support also contributed to significant progress in the Food and nutrition policy framework and strategic plans and better implementation by line ministries of multi-sectoral approaches to tackle malnutrition.

In **Nepal**, EU contributes through budget support to the implementation of the Multi-Sector Nutrition Plan (SDG 2). The Plan is now implemented in all provinces of Nepal to improve maternal, adolescent and child nutrition.

During 2021, the EU Budget Support Programme on Rural Development and Climate Change Response (RDCCR) in **Bhutan** was successfully concluded. The programme supported the Renewable Natural Resource sector that is considered extremely important in achieving SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate change).

Last but not least, in all **South Asian** countries particular attention is given to the advancement of democracy, rule of law, human rights and civil society (SDG 16 and 17). In **Sri Lanka**, the EU contributes to the resolution of critical underlying causes of conflict and prevention of escalation of local disputes. In the **Maldives**, a technical assistance project to support justice reform and anti-corruption efforts was launched as a pilot to pave the way to a wider rule of law programme under the 2021-2027 MIP.

In **Bangladesh**, two new projects were launched 2021 to promote gender equality, women's rights and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence in public and the workplace (SDG 5).

In the field of Justice (SDG 16), in Bangladesh, the EU supports the semi-formal justice system by making the national Village Courts structure functional in over 1 000 Union Councils (Union Parishad-UP) out of a total of 4 500 nationwide. These have provided efficient and effective legal services to more than 230 000 people in rural areas, including women and vulnerable populations. A new phase was launched 2021 also covering the formal justice system.

4.2.1.3. Implementation

To implement the principle of policy and foreign policy driven cooperation, the EU has put in place a series of Policy Dialogues Support Facilities in Asia/Pacific aiming to follow up on a significant number of dialogues and bilateral agreements and to pave the way to possible future stand-alone actions.

The facilities seek to advance partnerships under the multilateral sphere and to achieve goals set out in the EU Indo-Pacific strategy. In 2021, such facilities were in place in **Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China and India**, and new ones were recently adopted for **Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Taiwan and Hong Kong**.

However, while collaborations and exchanges with the EU are increasingly being promoted as they attract many partners, a key challenge across the EU's work is disinformation and disruptive influences, including narratives relaying untruthful messages about the EU. In this regard, the public diplomacy and policy outreach work carried out with the EU Delegations and local partners has been key to raise awareness in the region of the EU's commitment to the sustainable transformation of the planet, and as a key academic, scientific, security, economic and political partner for populations and governments alike. In 2021, Public Diplomacy projects were active in **China, India, South Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and ASEAN**. New funds for public diplomacy action to start in 2022 were approved in 2021 for **Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Taiwan and Hong Kong**.

In the **Philippines**, two financing agreements related to agriculture value chains in Bangsamoro and a National Copernicus Support Action programme were signed in December 2021. A large part of the programmes under the 2014-2020 MIP, amounting to EUR 216 million, were signed in the second half of 2020 and started implementation in 2021.

In **Myanmar**, a special measure under NDICI-Global Europe (EUR 65 million) for the period 2021-2024 was adopted in December 2021 to contribute to peace and resilience building, education and skills, and sustainable livelihoods, as well as overall democracy and human rights efforts. Additional support was also mobilised to support Myanmar nationals, notably along the Thai-Myanmar border as a region with large numbers of IDPs and refugees.

In **Vietnam**, two Financing Agreements were signed in December 2021: the EU-Vietnam Sustainable Energy Transition programme (SETP, EUR 142 million); and EU-Vietnam Enhancing Economic Governance programme (EEGP, EUR 18 million).

The first Trade and Sustainable Development Committee under the new EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement took place in November with active engagement of the Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) – an independent group of civil society organisations established in August 2021.

In **Laos**, the allocation of the multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2014-2020 (EUR 203 million) has been fully committed with one last contract of EUR 4.5 million to be signed in 2022. This represents a very positive achievement only one year after the end of the 2014-2020 programming cycle.

2021 was marked by the successful conclusion of the programming process and the adoption of the MIP 2021-2027 for **Indonesia** as well as the annual action plan (AAP) for a Cooperation Facility, which will be contracted in 2022 and will be the main instrument to support policy dialogue, strategic communication and public diplomacy as well as technical assistance for the Green Agenda in Indonesia. Two new projects have also been contracted in 2021, reinforcing the EU's action in priority areas such as the green transition and the response to COVID-19.

The main achievement for **South Asia** in 2021 was the adoption of the MIPs for Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and, for the first time since the last MFF, the Maldives.

AAPs for 2021 were adopted for **Bangladesh** in the areas of social protection and justice, Nepal in green growth, women empowerment and WASH, Sri Lanka in social cohesion and green policy, and in Bhutan to support agri-food systems.

The **Regional MIP** was also adopted and includes specific objectives and funds for **India** as well as for **South Asia regional integration**, with strong potentials for the implementation of the EU Indo-Pacific strategy and Global Gateway. A first measure for **India** was also adopted to contribute to strengthening cooperation in strategic areas including climate change, clean energy, trade and investment, business cooperation, innovation and digitalisation.

The validity of the 2019 Strategic Outlook on **China** was reaffirmed, in which China is described simultaneously as partner, competitor and rival. Despite severe setbacks in overall EU-China relations, cooperation on global issues, notably in multilateral frameworks, has been positive, notably for COP15 (biodiversity) in Kunming and COP26 (climate action) in Glasgow. The EU and China continued to actively cooperate on the topics of green economy, sustainable urban development, universal social protection and more. Three new contracts signed in 2021 will support the ongoing cooperation on emissions trading, as well as aviation partnership and intellectual property rights.

Budget support programmes in the region continued to deliver fiscal space to help countries in the region deal with the economic impact of the pandemic. Country MIPs were adopted across the region with a strong focus on livelihoods. The adoption of the **Bhutan** AAP on Sustainable Agri-Food Systems will contribute to nutritional security and diversified food production (through budget support). New commitments via AAPs were made to support jobs and private sector development and income in **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**.

In 2021, the EU and **India** signed a Connectivity Partnership which sets an ambitious political agenda for pursuing connectivity across a range of sectors in India and with third countries. Implementation of the Accelerating Smart and Inclusive Infrastructure Services partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) commenced in late 2021, which aims to generate almost USD 1 billion of infrastructure in South Asia across various sectors. The blending pipeline continued to be built in 2021 with the addition of the CITIIS2 project with AFD and the global energy efficiency programme (DESIREE) with the European Investment Bank (EIB) with India one of the core partners.

In 2021, the EU in **Bangladesh** paid budget support instalments for a total of EUR 75 million, after a positive review of progress in the Primary education and TVET sectors, and the National Social Security strategy. This includes the disbursement of EUR 33 million for social protection in the context of the Team Europe COVID-19 response.

In **Nepal**, the EU paid budget support instalments to support the Multi-Sector Nutrition programme, School Sector Development programme, Provincial and Local Governance Support programme and Agriculture Development strategy.

In **Pakistan**, the development cooperation continued to support socio-economic recovery in 2021 by strengthening macroeconomic resilience and stability, in particular in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The EU disbursed EUR 20 million under the Development through Enhanced Education programme (DEEP) in the province of Sindh in support of efforts to roll out the Sindh Education Sector plan and roadmap 2019-2024. Another milestone was the signature of the Financing Agreement and subsequent contribution agreement of EUR 50 million for the Poverty Alleviation and

Inclusive Development in Rural Sindh (PAIDAR) project. All but one contract implementing the MIP 2014-2020 in Pakistan are now contracted.

Implementation of the **Accelerating Smart and Inclusive Infrastructure Services** partnership with IFC commenced in late 2021, which aims to generate an almost USD 1 billion of infrastructure in South Asia across various sectors.

Sri Lanka and the **Maldives** continued to face challenges due the COVID-19 pandemic. In Sri Lanka, two programmes were adopted to support green recovery and social cohesion and reconciliation.

In **South Asia and South-East Asia**, **gender equality** was mainstreamed in cooperation portfolios and country level implementation plans were delivered. Nepal was one of the winners in the GAP III Awards 2021.

The EU also cooperated with some of the most important and influential High-Income Countries in the world, such as **Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand**, on bilateral issues of mutual interest, on global and regional challenges and on multilateralism, based on existing or prospective framework agreements.

EU projects have continued to be instrumental for the achievement of EU policy objectives in **Japan** in a wide range of policy areas including trade policy, urban development and several strategic dialogues such as security and defence, connectivity, environment and energy. EU action has been particularly effective in accompanying the second year of implementation of the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). At the end of 2021, a new action was approved to support the EU/Japan Connectivity Partnership.

In **South Korea/Republic of Korea (ROK)**, EU projects played an important role in promoting the image of the EU and facilitating a dialogue-based cooperation. The EU-ROK Policy Dialogue Support Facility started operations in 2021 and supported the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the EU-ROK Free Trade Agreement by producing a short film on the very tangible benefits the agreement has brought to citizens in the EU and in South Korea. EU projects also assisted with outreach activities on the EU's newly adopted Indo-Pacific strategy and in identifying substantive cooperation opportunities. Projects engaged with civil society organisations, local authorities as well as youth and business representatives on key EU priorities including the green transition, human rights, and market access in South Korea's offshore wind power industry.

In **Australia and New Zealand**, the EU continued to support the ongoing negotiation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) through action monitoring and analysing the Australian and New Zealand trade and economic-related legislations and regulatory frameworks. In addition, new action was recently adopted to support broad policy dialogues (and public diplomacy action) with these two likeminded countries, as of 2022. Similar policy dialogues and public diplomacy facilities have recently been adopted under NDICI-Global Europe also for high income territories such as **Taiwan and Hong Kong**.

Besides bilateral projects, the EU has been very active on policy driven regional and multi-country actions in support of EU flagship strategies and strategic objectives (notably green transition, plastics, climate change, security, anti-microbial resistance supply chains and waste management).

By engaging various key partner countries under single thematic actions, the EU enhances the potential and reach of its messages on environmental, climate, social, security and trade challenges and promotes wider collaboration and exchanges based on good practices. This in turn inspires and

motivates other countries to initiate substantive policy changes to align with the required efforts needed to transform key economic and social sectors.

For instance, EU action on eliminating illegal waste trafficking (**Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam**) and addressing plastic marine litter (**China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam**) is pioneering new concepts, developing cooperation with EU enforcers and pushing for the reaction of national authorities and regional stakeholders and the responsibilities of producers across Asia, with an overall aim to support the transition to a more circular economy in the region.

The EU's global campaign on sustainable use of natural resources and against deforestation is being operationalised through multi-sectoral engagement with **Malaysian and Indonesian** counterparts towards sustainable production of palm oil.

Action on Food Safety measures supports dialogues on significant barriers to market access in Asia (**China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam**) and develops practical guidance for EU producers to increase EU trade of vegetables, fruits and meat in Asia and enhance the understanding of EU rules and regionalisation.

Local and decentralised cooperation through partnership between EU and Asian and Pacific cities, as well as the internationalisation of local climate actions through the Global Covenant of Mayors has gained recognition for the substantive outputs they provide to link national determined contributions to global emission reduction and sustainability targets.

The extension of civil aviation partnerships to all regions of Asia - South, Southeast and East - also illustrate the growing interest in aligning on standards and protocols where the EU is leading. Particular attention is also paid to working with partners in Southeast Asia on the reduction of emissions from civil aviation by assisting them with Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) preparedness.

At the end of 2021, a partnership was signed between the EU and the Tripartite on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) (WHO/FAO/OIE) to implement, in cooperation with nine countries in Asia (**China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam**), the European One Health action plan against AMR contributing to the achievement of the WHO Global action plan on AMR and promoting alliances in Asia on future pandemics preparedness. In addition, the EU worked jointly on identifying preventive and science-based solutions against future wildlife-related pandemics in close collaboration with key partner countries in the region (**China, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam**) and the UN illustrating how projects can effectively foster the EU's action on multilateralism.

On gender, the EU supports a multi-country project (**China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam**) on women's economic empowerment.

Lastly, ties with key partners in the Asia-Pacific region are being strengthened in the security sector by operationalising practical collaboration in the fields of cyber security, maritime security, crisis management and countering terrorism (**Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and India**).

CASE STUDIES

Cambodia

With the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have been closed for long periods of time, leading to a learning crisis among children, while at the same time, many Cambodians have lost their jobs and incomes. In response to this, the EU has engaged in social protection measures targeting those households and workers most severely hit by the pandemic. The EU has also advanced discussions on the development of social protection schemes for informal economy workers and employment for people living in situations of vulnerability. The Social Protection Budget Support programme, which was formulated at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, aims to strengthen social protection systems for the poor, in particular during crisis situations.

In response to protracted school closures, the EU education programme in Cambodia has been instrumental in the COVID-19 mitigation response focusing on the inequalities compounded by COVID-19, such as an increase in the number of children dropping out of school and poor learning outcomes. Thanks to the support from the EU, the Cambodian Government has been able to offer initiatives such as scholarships to up to a quarter of a million basic education students per year. The EU's education programme in Cambodia has also helped to increase operating funds for schools and build 750 new 'healthy' (with bathrooms and handwashing facilities) and climate-resilient classrooms. These initiatives are key for a sustainable and inclusive socio-economic recovery post-COVID-19.

Bangladesh

During 2021, the EU supported public finance management (PFM) interventions such as the World Bank implemented Multi-Donor Trust Fund 'Strengthening Public Expenditure Management programme (SPEMP)' and the EU PFM technical assistance, which were instrumental in further strengthening Bangladesh's PFM systems and recovery from the pandemic. With support from SPEMP, the implementation of the roadmap to secure an Integrated Budget and Accounting System (iBAS++) is underway and a functional gap analysis of iBAS++ has been finalised. The programme also supported the development of a Medium-Term Revenue strategy (MTRS) and a tax expenditure analysis. Finally, SPEMP is supporting the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA++) assessment which was launched in October 2021.

India

A contribution agreement with Agence Française de Développement (AFD) was established in 2021, for EUR 12.48 million, for the implementation of the City Investment to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain 2.0 (CITIIS 2.0) programme. CITIIS 2.0 is the second phase of an ongoing initiative in support of India's Smart Cities programme under the leadership of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and will contribute to SDGs 13, 11, 5, and 9, and leverage investments of up to EUR 800 million.

Team Europe

Team Europe initiatives (TEIs) adopted for **South Asia** responded to the EU, Member States and the partner countries' interests. Two of them are under the Green Deal pillar: **Bangladesh** for EU support to the transition towards renewable energy; and **Nepal** with proposed support to green recovery that includes elements of human capital development and good governance for a strong transformational impact. Two further TEIs were proposed under Growth and Jobs: support to the

decent work agenda in Bangladesh, particularly relevant in the context of the country's textile industry; and private sector development, income generation and job creation in **Pakistan**. Engagement continues for the implementation of these and for the adoption of a new TEI in Sri Lanka, focusing on green recovery.

Team Europe initiative in Bangladesh – Green Energy Transition

Energy is a key factor in boosting economic growth and reducing socio-economic inequalities. At the same time, energy production and utilisation contributes to global warming. To reach the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the EU Green Deal ambitions, a global effort is needed to decarbonise the energy sector and prioritise renewable energy production and energy efficiency, to which the Government of Bangladesh is strongly committed. The TEI green energy transition (GET) aims to support Bangladesh to build a power system that leads to maximum coverage of the country's energy demand through renewable energy by promoting public and private investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency measures, hence reducing environmental degradation and ultimately contributing to the global response to climate change.

Team Europe initiative in Philippines – Circular Economy and Plastic Waste Management

The proposed TEI foresees the implementation of an integrated approach to improve plastic waste management. Improving plastic waste management and reduction of plastic waste and marine litter is an initiative of strategic and transformative value for the Philippines. Widespread marine litter is a recognised national crisis that needs a national concerted effort. This will build on the annual action plan (AAP) 2022 on the Circular Economy programme. EU Member States are expected to contribute beyond co-funding, focusing as well on providing their expertise and EU knowledge on circular economy. Further involvement by European Development Finance Institutions (EDFIs) remains to be determined.

Green Team Europe initiative for the Lao PDR

Given the convergence between the objectives of the European Green Deal and the Lao PDR's Green Growth Agenda 2030, European partners have agreed on a TEI on green actions. The Green TEI for the Lao PDR will seek to foster sustainable investments by focusing on sustainable agriculture and forest partnership.

Green Team Europe initiative in Partnership with ASEAN/South-East Asia

This regional TEI was launched on 18 November 2021 at the EU-ASEAN Sustainable Development Dialogue, hosted online by the Kingdom of Thailand (see below). Austria, Germany, Denmark, France, Romania and the EIB are partners in the TEI with a range of contributions in the form of grants and loans, including for green infrastructure. In December 2021, the EU approved a EUR 30 million Green Initiative programme. This will support cooperation with ASEAN on climate action and environmental protection and make a key contribution to the Green TEI.

The TEI will address the transition towards circular, climate-neutral and environmentally sustainable economies and resilient ecosystems, implementing the external dimension of the European Green Deal covering the areas of clean energy, circular economy, sustainable food systems, biodiversity and sustainable landscape and sustainable urban development and planning for green, socially inclusive and smart/ digitally connected cities.

ASEAN

In December 2020, the EU and ASEAN elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership, building on decades of dynamic and broad-based cooperation. In 2021, the EU approved the overall Regional MIP for ASIA-Pacific, including priorities areas for ASEAN/South-East Asia covering Implementing the ASEAN-EU Strategic Partnership, Green and inclusive sustainable development, and Sustainable connectivity.

The EU-ASEAN- Dialogue on Sustainable Development provided a platform for the EU and ASEAN to discuss and take stock of joint priority areas, notably on climate change and environmental degradation; gender equality and women's empowerment; and sustainable growth, innovation and digitalisation.

Migration

Throughout 2021, the Commission has been working on implementation of the proposed New Pact on Migration and Asylum with a proposal for migration partnerships with a range of priority countries. Within Asia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan are considered as priority countries for migration partnerships. EU development cooperation in these countries has included a strategic focus on sectors that provide a balanced approach, targeting poverty and inclusive growth, thereby addressing root causes of fragility and migration. Examples are job creation through private sector development, income generation, community development projects and technical and vocational educational training (TVET). In Afghanistan, the Commission is addressing the root causes of migration through its support to basic needs and its response to the effects of internal and regional forced displacement, without recognising or legitimising the de facto authorities.

The EU has provided a comprehensive response to the challenges of migration and forced displacement in Asia and the Middle East with a focus on Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq and Pakistan through activities still ongoing from the previous MFF.

Highlights in 2021 were the approval of the Regional MIP for Asia-Pacific, where Migration features as a priority area with an allocation of EUR 422 million. This will support actions approved at country level and contribute to the indicative migration spending target of 10 % under the NDICI-Global Europe. A package of special measures for the Afghan regional displacement situation (EUR 79 million) was fast-tracked for adoption at the end of 2021. In addition, programmes in Myanmar and Thailand were adapted and approved to take account of the evolving situation in Myanmar in 2021.

In **China**, the Migration and Mobility Dialogues Support Project continued to be instrumental in supporting the EU-China Migration and Mobility Dialogue (MMD) tackling issues on visa processes, talent mobility and irregular migration.

The EU-India Cooperation and Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Project has directly supported the EU-India migration dialogue and cooperation in such fields as irregular migration, tackling through increased awareness on student mobility, remittances and development of an online course on EU and Member State competences on migration.

4.2.1.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

South Asia

Following the takeover of **Afghanistan** by the Taliban in August 2021, the political and institutional context in the country has completely changed, along with the challenges and objectives for the years to come. Afghanistan is facing a humanitarian crisis that affects the human right to life, as basic needs are no longer met. **After a dramatic 35 % increase on the year before, Afghanistan had the highest number of people in emergency food insecurity in the world by the end of 2021. More than one in two children under the age of five faced acute malnutrition, with one million children at risk of death.** The situation of women and girls has become particularly dire as their rights and opportunities were increasingly restricted by the interim Taliban leadership. Continuous and systematic efforts from the de facto authorities to regulate women's behaviour paired with family and community pressure and fear of punishment contributed to significantly increase the large-scale institutionalisation of gender-based discrimination and to further exclude women from the social, economic and political spheres. The lack of access to basic services exacerbated by COVID-19 posed significant challenges for the Afghan population. Households had increasingly exhausted their means for survival and had resorted to taking on unmanageable debt and relying on negative coping mechanisms such as selling their children for food.

The EU's priorities from the Taliban takeover have been established under the guidance of the five benchmarks for EU engagement with the de facto authorities established by the Council and focus on alleviating the impact of the grave humanitarian crisis through our basic needs aid package and to engage with the de facto authorities on inclusion, human rights, and the provision of an enabling civic space for civil society and the media to operate fairly and freely in the country.

In 2021, the EU provided EUR 222 million for humanitarian assistance programmes covering the needs of displaced populations, in particular on food security, nutrition, health, WASH, demining to protect humanitarian workers, protection and education with a specific focus on the needs of women and girls. Of the total funding, 26 % is allocated to health and nutrition, 23 % to food security and livelihoods, 14 % to education, 12 % mine action and logistics and 11 % to winterisation and multi-sector support. A minimum of five million beneficiaries in extreme need are planned to be reached in the immediate term. As of 12 December 2021, around 280 tons of life-saving medication, COVID-19 and nutritional items have been delivered to Kabul through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge, in close co-operation with humanitarian partners.

Southeast Asia

In 2021, the **Rohingya crisis** entered its fifth year with over 900 000 refugees in **Bangladesh** and no prospect for a rapid end to the crisis. To alleviate the suffering of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, and their host communities in Bangladesh in 2021 the EU contributed EUR 35 million to the humanitarian response. The EU assistance reached approximately 900 000 Rohingya refugees in the sprawling and overcrowded refugee camps of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, as well as hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi people in vulnerable situations covered by the Joint Humanitarian Plan. The key needs addressed included food assistance, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, protection, shelter and education. The EU also responded to additional challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the health response, and funding isolation and treatment centres as

well as the establishment of crucial surveillance and testing capacity in the affected district of Bangladesh.

The coup d'état in **Myanmar** on 1 February 2021 saw a severe deterioration of the humanitarian situation with 406 000 people across the country becoming displaced due to conflict and food insecurity growing to unprecedented levels. To respond to the country-wide humanitarian needs, in 2021 the EU contributed EUR 23 million to the humanitarian response. The EU assistance reached approximately one million people throughout the country including in new conflict areas and as well responding to the needs of refugees in Thailand and India. The key needs addressed included multi-sectoral emergency response, protection, food assistance, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter and education. The EU also responded to additional challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic funding the importation and distribution of lifesaving oxygen equipment.

In 2021 the EU provided EUR 4.8 million in humanitarian assistance to the **Philippines** to address the needs arising from the Mindanao conflict and natural disasters, mainly typhoons. Main sectors of intervention were food security, WASH, shelter, education in emergencies, health, protection, disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness. With its support the EU contributed to alleviate the needs of approximately 115 000 internally displaced persons due to conflict and several hundred thousand of people affected by natural catastrophes. In addition, the EU supported national authorities to be better prepared in case of disasters.

4.2.1.5. Crisis response and preparedness

EU crisis response actions were mobilised to respond to the dramatic events in **Myanmar** and **Afghanistan**. In **Myanmar**, a number of actions were adopted in support of the protection and resilience of the civilian population as well as to enhance international efforts for accountability and the fight against impunity.

In **Afghanistan**, efforts to support the peace process continued until the Taliban takeover of the country. The first Capacity-Building in Support of Development action for **Afghanistan** for the management of ammunition stockpiles, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence of Afghanistan, had to be suspended due to the Taliban take-over. Efforts to enhance human security, the protection of civilians and the promotion of international humanitarian law continue.

Crisis response support to Rohingya refugees in **Bangladesh** continued, as did the regional initiative on the prevention of violent extremism in **Southeast Asia** and support to increased security in the **Maldives**.

In line with the EU's strategy for cooperation in Indo-Pacific, the Critical Maritime Routes Indo-Pacific (CRIMARIO II) project established new partnerships with **South and Southeast Asian partners** to boost interconnected maritime coordination to enhance maritime security.

4.2.2. Central Asia

4.2.2.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a serious impact in all Central Asia countries. Recovery efforts were high on all political agendas as was the regime change in Afghanistan.

In 2021, Kazakhstan celebrated its 30th anniversary of independence. The country's agenda was dominated by post COVID-19 recovery, climate change (COP26), challenges to reforms in the area of human rights and the situation in Afghanistan. In November, President Tokayev visited Brussels.

Although Kazakhstan, like its neighbours, was hit hard by COVID-19, GDP grew by 3.4 %. Kazakhstan expressed interest in closer economic cooperation with the EU. It announced the intention to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15 % by 2030, and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Despite President Tokayev's firm commitment to human rights, civil society remained critical about the lack of effective implementation. Kazakhstan endorsed the UN Security Council's call for an inclusive and representative government in Afghanistan and cautiously began restoring economic ties with the Taliban while refraining from official recognition.

In Kyrgyzstan, the parliamentary elections of 28 November 2021 completed the transition process, which had started with the cancellation of the 4 October 2020 vote, followed by early presidential elections in January 2021 and adoption of a new Constitution in April. Pro-government parties won the elections amid a low voter turnout (around 34 %). In many areas, government policy was moving away from democratic standards and principles. The new Constitution that entered into force in May was widely criticised for strengthening the President's authoritarian rule. The new President Japarov and the political elite made a huge effort to consolidate their power through significant reforms in legislation including adopting the new, more centralised 'Presidential' constitution and a legal inventory encompassing 359 laws.

In 2021, Tajikistan's domestic politics registered no dramatic change. The country remains an authoritarian state with no real political opposition and elements of a personality cult. President Rahmon, who turned 69 in October, has been in office since 1992. Of particular concern was the situation in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region, following the wave of protests that erupted in November after the killing of a local resident by law enforcement authorities. Serious human rights concerns derived also from the clashes at the border with Kyrgyzstan in April, which led to the death of 55 people and the displacement of more than 40 000 civilians. Regional security and stability are a key concern for Tajikistan, especially since the regime change in Afghanistan in August 2021. The two countries share a border of more than 1 350 km. Contrary to its neighbours, Tajikistan has adopted a strong and vocal position against the Taliban and has called for an inclusive Afghan Government with a fair representation of national minorities, including ethnic Tajiks, the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.

In Turkmenistan, the authoritarian regime of President Berdymuhamedov continued to exercise tight control of the population leaving no room for political opposition. In July, the President's son Serdar was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, which was considered as another step to prepare him to succeed his father. The Government continued to deny the existence of any COVID-19 cases in the country but kept up tough restrictions throughout the year. The pandemic had a negative impact on all areas of the economy. The country experienced shortages of subsidised food. In its foreign policy, Turkmenistan continued to pursue a policy of neutrality. Having a strong interest in cross-border infrastructure projects with Afghanistan, it had established contacts with the Taliban already before their takeover in August and started cooperation with the new regime in Kabul before the end of the year.

In Uzbekistan, President Mirziyoyev (in office since 2016) was re-elected on 24 October 2021 with a large majority. International observers reported significant procedural shortcomings on election day and the absence of a meaningful competitive electoral environment. In the field of human rights there is steady progress despite ongoing challenges, notably to the freedom of expression, with question marks about the rule of law. Negotiations to conclude a new Enhanced Partnership and

Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) have neared completion. Uzbekistan also won GSP+ status in April 2021. Since the Taliban take-over in August, Uzbekistan has showed a pragmatic approach towards the new regime in Kabul, prioritising stability, trade and connectivity.

4.2.2.2. Working together towards the SDGs

EU funded actions across the region continued to address a wide range of SDGs in line with the multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) at country and regional level and the new EU strategy on Central Asia, which sets out the focus of EU support in terms of three interlinked objectives: support for resilience, support for prosperity and support for intra-regional cooperation.

Concerning cooperation with **Kyrgyzstan**, the EU adopted a new MIP for the period 2021-2027, with three priority areas: governance and digital transformation, human development, and green and climate resilient economy. This will enable the EU to continue the work done under the previous MFF in the country. A first annual action plan (AAP) under this MIP was also adopted, constituting an Education Sector Reform programme that will support mostly SDG 4 (Inclusive and equitable quality education), but also SDG 5 (Gender equality).

In **Tajikistan**, the MIP for 2021-2027 will focus on inclusive green and digital economy, human development, and natural resources management, efficiency and resilience. The three new priority areas build on the previous MFF work in areas such as education and health and will expand the EU's actions within the water-energy nexus field. The first AAP adopted under this MIP will support the country's energy sector reform towards the deployment of renewable energy sources.

The new 2021-2027 programme for **Uzbekistan** will focus on effective governance and digital transformation, inclusive, digital and green growth, and development of a smart eco-friendly agri-food sector. A feature of the new programme is the Team Europe initiative (TEI) 'Support to a modern and sustainable agri-food sector and resilient livelihoods', which aims at facilitating inclusive, green, sustainable, gender responsive and climate-smart development of the agri-food sector. Five annual action plans (AAPs), which are planned for adoption in the first half of 2022, will strengthen the national anticorruption system and the capacities of the Ministry of Justice and, through a green economy technical assistance programme, the implementation of environment-related conventions. Complementing the current EU budget support programme, on-going since 2019, the development of the agri-food sector and resilient rural livelihoods will also be supported through a new programme, to be proposed for adoption in 2022.

In **Kazakhstan**, a Cooperation Facility will support, from 2021-2027, the implementation of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA). The Facility will focus on two priority areas: Sustainable economic growth with an emphasis on micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), devastated by the COVID-19 crisis, and a focus on women and youth-led MSMEs; and rule of law to strengthen the legal framework and institutions in place ensuring the respect of human rights and justice for all.

In **Turkmenistan**, a Cooperation Facility will contribute, from 2021-2027, to continuing and reinforcing EU-Turkmenistan relations and policy dialogue and will focus on two priority areas: Green aspects of the economy; and Improving the business climate with a focus on agriculture/rural development and supporting trade development. Emphasis will be put on micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with women and youth led MSMEs benefiting from specific support.

For both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the multiannual action plans to implement the cooperation facilities were adopted in December 2021.

With regard to SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in Central Asia. During the period 2014-2020 there were 8 600 short-term mobilities in both ways, 418 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to Central Asian students, and 114 capacity-building projects and 13 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021 there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: 79 students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships, while 1 Jean Monnet Module and 1 Jean Monnet Chair from Uzbekistan, plus 1 Jean Monnet Center of Excellence from Kazakhstan were selected.

4.2.2.3. Implementation

A Strategic Evaluation of EU Blending and Budget Support in Kyrgyzstan was conducted including discussions with colleagues from EU Headquarters and the Delegation, the partner government and external stakeholders. This evaluation, the first of its kind in Asia-Pacific, is innovative in its approach of assessing how different instruments available to the EU are compatible and mutually reinforcing or overlapping. Delivery of the evaluation report is expected early in 2022.

In November 2021, the first in-person European Union – Central Asia Economic Forum took place in Bishkek. The Forum was led on the EU side by the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission Valdis Dombrovskis and gathered Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers of Central Asian countries as well as Ministers and high-level officials from more than 15 EU Member States, representatives of the EU and Central Asia private sector, international financial institutions and international organisations, and civil society. In line with the EU strategy on Central Asia, the Forum focused on green recovery, digitalisation and a better business environment. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen EU-Central Asia cooperation to support the development of diversified and competitive private-sector driven economies that can create jobs, integrate in regional and global value chains, and provide opportunities for all economic actors, as well as help Central Asian states build back better.

The Commission participated in the International Conference on Connectivity in Central and South Asia, which took place on 16 July 2021 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Commissioner Urpilainen participated in the 17th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting on 22 November 2021 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, chaired by High Representative Vice-President Borrell.

Human Development

In Kyrgyzstan, the final disbursement under the ongoing Education Budget Support programme, worth EUR 7.4 million, was delivered in December 2021. A successor programme was adopted in the same month.

In Tajikistan, the three contribution agreements planned under the previous MFF Health Development programme were successfully signed. Working with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MOHSP), GIZ, WHO and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its implementation, the EU is aiming, through this programme, to support Tajikistan's progress towards universal health coverage.

Green Deal

In Kyrgyzstan, the EU contracted in March 2021 the Nookat Water Project, a Blending operation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) worth EUR 2.17 million.

2021 saw the successful completion of the tendering phase for the first EU regional programme in years to tackle regional energy integration: the EU Sustainable Energy Connectivity in Central Asia programme. This project will support regional governments' regulatory reforms and investments in sustainable energy for greater integration of the regional energy market. The project will be part of the Team Europe initiative for water, energy and climate change in Central Asia.

Sustainable growth and jobs

A flagship project of Tajikistan's Rural Development programme II under the previous MIP, the Integrated Rural Development Project started implementation in early 2021. It aims to boost added value of agricultural production, thus increasing the income of value chain actors through a market-oriented value chain approach.

In Turkmenistan, the EBRD continued implementing a bilateral support scheme for small and medium enterprises (SMEs): the Enterprise Growth programme.

Digitalisation, science, technology and innovation

The disbursement of the first two tranches under a Digitalisation Sector Reform Performance Contract in Kyrgyzstan took place in December 2021, totalling EUR 12 million. This is the first ever disbursement under a digitalisation Budget Support programme in Asia-Pacific, supporting the capacities of the Kyrgyz Government to deliver on its Digital Concept and the related Kyrgyz Digital Transformation Roadmap 2019-2023. Under the same programme, a Twinning project was launched in November 2021 with the participation of Commission Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis. This operation implemented by a consortium of three EU Member States (Estonia, Finland and Italy) aims to build the capacity of national authorities to manage and participate in e-governance as well as promote transparency and accountability.

Migration

At the end of 2021, the EU put in place a comprehensive package to support existing and newly displaced Afghans and their host communities in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, with a focus on protection, access to basic services, livelihoods and skills development. This includes support to Tajik communities in hosting Afghan arrivals implemented by IOM and UNHCR.

Governance, peace and security

The EU launched the new phases of two regional programmes in the broad field of security in 2021: the 7th phase of the Central Asia Drug Action programme (CADAP 7) in February, and the 10th phase of the Border Management programme in Central Asia (BOMCA 10) in April. Both programmes are implemented by EU Member State agencies and represent a holistic approach to security issues in Central Asia, respectively drug demand reduction and integrated border management.

Following the Afghanistan crisis which began in August 2021, BOMCA 10 was immediately redirected to face the needs of Central Asian countries deriving from the changed security situation. Training and equipment were delivered to Border Guards in Tajikistan, the country most confronted by

negative fallout from the new circumstances, and discussions took place with all Central Asian countries to determine how to best support them to avoid regional destabilisation.

In Kyrgyzstan, the EU contracted and launched the programme 'Justice4All: Mainstreaming People-Centred Reform in the Justice Sector' with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The main focus of the new programme is on supporting the establishment and functioning of probation, crucial to carry forward the implementation of the judicial reform and advancing further digitalisation in the justice sector.

Team Europe initiatives

Initial discussions took place for the preparation of a regional Team Europe initiative (TEI) on digital connectivity in Central Asia, including exchanges with EU Member States and financing institutions to gauge their level of interest. Sufficient interest was expressed to justify the continued preparation of this initiative in 2022.

The Regional TEI on water, energy and climate change in Central Asia was also discussed with EU Member States and financing institutions, and a working group was set up with a kick-off meeting in December 2021. In Uzbekistan, the TEI 'Support to a modern and sustainable agri-food sector and resilient livelihoods' will aim at facilitating inclusive, green, sustainable, gender responsive and climate-smart development of agri-food sector supported through blending operations, technical assistance, budget support and policy dialogue. Through this TEI, the EU, France, Germany, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EBRD will work with the Government and non-state actors to address the risk of exclusion in the transition, and to promote the competitiveness and market inclusion of the most disadvantaged producers in low-carbon and climate-resilient value-chains.

CASE STUDY

The **Quality Education Support programme in Tajikistan** successfully achieved its objectives at the end of 2021. With an allocation of EUR 15 million it has been the EU's first large-scale programme in support of the education sector in the country.

The main achievements in general secondary education include the reform of Teachers' Continuous Professional Development, the piloting of the first ever National Learning Assessment in 5th and 11th grades and the finalisation of the reform for transition to a competence-based approach. More than 63 000 teachers were trained and 72 school laboratories were supplied.

The main achievements in the vocational education and training area include the development of the Continuous Professional Development, Teachers' Competency Framework and the Staff Appraisal System for TVET teaching and management staff. 2 500 teachers received training through 30 programmes and eight Teacher Re-training centres were established.

This programme has paved the way for future cooperation on education, which is a crucial sector under the Human Development Priority Area in the Tajikistan MIP 2021-2027, in support of the country's growing young population.

Under the regional programme, a new programme, DARYA, which will start this year implemented by the European Training Foundation, will take forward support for TVET and youth employment throughout Central Asia.

4.2.2.4. Crisis response and preparedness

Actions carried out under the NDICI-Global Europe supported work with **Central Asian partners** on stability, social cohesion and cross-border dialogue, directly implementing the priorities set in the new EU strategy on Central Asia.

Following the increase in tensions after the October 2020 elections in **Kyrgyzstan**, and to reduce the risk of conflict in relation to the November 2021 elections, the EU prepared a crisis response action to support a participative and pluralistic political dialogue as well as efforts to avoid violence in connection with the 2021 elections and referenda.

In response to the Taliban takeover of **Afghanistan**, support for border management in **Tajikistan** was mobilised. This includes the first capacity building of military actors in support of development and security for development (CBSD) actions.

Through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), the EU continued to support efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism across the region, in particular under the Strengthening Resilience to Violence and Extremism (STRIVE) programme. Work in this area focused on putting in place legislation in line with international law and standards and work with prison staff in **Kazakhstan** to prevent the radicalisation of inmates.

Funding provided under the IcSP enabled the UNDP to work with stakeholders in the **Ferghana Valley** trans-border area to enhance preparedness and resilience to climate change, focusing on water resource management. A scoping study on environmental crime was also launched to explore linkages between criminal activity, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

The mandate of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) Central Asia, extended until February 2023, promotes good and close relations between the EU and the countries of Central Asia on the basis of common values and interests as set out in relevant agreements. The role contributes to strengthening the stability and cooperation between the countries in Central Asia as well as democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

4.2.3. Middle East/Gulf region

4.2.3.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): the Al-Ula Agreement in January 2021 represented a major breakthrough that led the Gulf countries to resolve their 'internal rift'. The EU-GCC partnership benefitted from the renewed GCC unity and solidarity, and institutional engagement has been fully resumed.

In 2021 for the first time in five years, the 23rd EU-GCC Regional Directors Meeting, convened in a virtual format and offered the opportunity to discuss regional crises of mutual interest and lay the ground for a more strategic and broaden partnership encompassing regional and global challenges (green transition and climate, COVID-19 response, counterterrorism, coordination on humanitarian action and development assistance). The 26th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial meeting was held for the first time since 2016 in Brussels in the margins of the EU FAC of February 2022; it was prepared by the Joint Cooperation Committee held in Riyadh the same month. It endorsed a joint cooperation programme setting forth institutional events, sectoral working groups and joint activities to be carried out over the next five years.

To accompany the new momentum in the EU-GCC relations, the EU started preparation for the adoption of an EU Joint Communication on partnership with the Gulf region due for adoption in early 2022.

Along with the region-to-region cooperation, the EU continued engaging bilaterally with GCC countries through the non-binding cooperation arrangements. On 10 February, the High Representative Vice-President (HRVP) and the **Bahraini** Foreign Minister signed a Cooperation Arrangement in Brussels. The third Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) was held with the UAE (March). To implement his mandate from January 2020 to contribute to Gulf security, the HRVP visited the Gulf region in early October, notably the UAE (including Dubai EXPO 2020), Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The EU also continued engaging on human rights with the Gulf countries, including by holding the fifth round of the informal Human Rights Dialogue with **Bahrain** (February), the 2nd with **Kuwait** (March) and the 10th round with the UAE (June). During 2021, several EU high level visits (at Commissioner level) to the UAE took place, mostly in the context of the (postponed) Dubai EXPO 2020 where the EU participated with a series of high-level events.

EU-**Qatar** relations reached an unprecedented intensity in high-level contacts and in the breath of our cooperation: from HRVP's visit to Doha and the signing of the Aviation Agreement last October to cooperating in the evacuation of EU nationals and Afghans at risk from Kabul. Cooperation on Human Rights focused on labour reforms and the dismantling of the kafala system, with high level engagement by several EU Commissioners (Reynders, Schmit) with the Qatari Minister for Labour as well as expert-level discussions during the third EU-Qatar Human Rights Dialogue held on 3 June 2021.

Institutional engagement with **Saudi Arabia** underwent a significant boost with HRVPs' first visit to the Kingdom in October, which included the signature of the Cooperation Arrangement and the organisation of the long-awaited first EU-KSA Human Rights Dialogue on 27 September 2021 co-chaired by the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and with Member States present as observers.

The EU and **Iraq** further strengthened bilateral relations through the implementation of the EU-Iraq Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The EU hosted the informal migration dialogue in February, which sets out a comprehensive cooperation on migration and asylum. The EU also hosted the PCA Subcommittee on energy (15 June 2021), as well as the Cooperation Committee (15 September 2021) which took stock of the three preceding Subcommittees and cleared the institutional path for a Cooperation Council at Ministerial level. At political level, EU foreign Ministers had a good exchange with the Iraqi Foreign Minister at the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council in June, which was followed by visits of EU HRVP Borrell and VP Schinas to Iraq in September and November respectively. In parallel, the EU continued to work on various areas such as supporting the Iraqi October elections by deploying an Election Observation Mission, migration, human rights, employment opportunities, socio-economic reforms, stabilisation, accountability for Da'esh crimes (UNITAD) and civilian security sector reform through the ongoing EU Advisory Mission/EUAM. The EU also continued co-chairing the Iraq Economic Contact Group (IECG) throughout the year to assist Iraq with international expertise on its economic reform path.

Throughout 2021, the EU continued its active diplomatic outreach to relevant actors including the Government of **Yemen**, Houthis, southern movements and regional actors in close coordination with the UN. As part of its efforts to contribute to peace and stability, the EU has in 2021 also adopted an

integrated approach to the peace process to promote coherence and effectiveness of the EU and Member State actions. In addition to support the UN Special Envoy and his office, the EU has also continued support to de-escalation and peace-making initiatives, stabilisation, development assistance and humanitarian support.

4.2.3.2. Working together towards the SDGs

The Commission's activities in **Iraq** comprise a series of multi-sector and multi-stakeholder measures focusing on sustained improvements in governance, fair and sustainable employment opportunities and building a solid human capital, thereby holistically addressing root causes of fragility and displacement. Following the improving security conditions and the normalisation process ongoing since the territorial defeat of Da'esh, the EU is changing approach from short-term post-crisis recovery to long-term development cooperation, with a view to better address the SDGs. Hence, the European Commission adopted a multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for Iraq for the period 2021-2027. The MIP has as overall objective of consolidating Iraq's fragile political and economic stability by addressing root causes of fragility and displacement. It is based around three priority areas: green job creation and economic diversification; human development and social contract; and digital participatory governance and democracy.

The persistent conflict in **Yemen** continues to feed one of the deep humanitarian crises in the World and to undermine human development, reversing hard-won progress on the SDGs and setting back development by more than 47 years⁹⁵. The EU has mobilised its development assistance to preserve the functioning of local institutions, basic services and economic activity in order to preserve the social and economic fabric of Yemen. Through an integrated humanitarian-development nexus approach, the EU supports actions towards the prevention of hunger, eradication of poverty and provision of quality basic services, including healthcare, education, clean water and sanitation, as well as affordable and clean energy. In addition, gender equality, climate adaptation and peace objectives are mainstreamed across EU development actions.

Iran does not participate in the Voluntary National Review process. *The Sustainable Development Report 2021*⁹⁶ is the only source indicating Iran's progress towards SDGs. SDG 4 (Quality Education) remains the only achieved SDG. A positive trend is noted only on SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). Major challenges remain in achieving SDG 2 (Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions). The adoption of a first multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for the period 2021-2027 will permit a more sustained approach towards SDG attainment. This MIP has as three priority areas: sustainable jobs and growth; the climate change-environment-green transition nexus; and cross-border challenges (migration, forced displacement drugs).

In the **Gulf countries**, cooperation with the EU through the EU-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Clean Energy network and the EU-GCC Economic diversification dialogue has continued to address SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry,

⁹⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2019, <https://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/assessing-the-impact-of-war-on-development-in-yemen-SDGs.html>

⁹⁶ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/>

innovation and infrastructure), and SDG 13 (Climate action). There are intense cooperation activities and dialogues at technical and political levels under these two projects towards achievement of SDGs 7, 8, 9 and 13. Some key events on hydrogen, research and innovation, and trade and investment have been organised in the region, including at the Expo2020 in Dubai with the participation of EU Commissioners to promote EU policy exchanges and outreach. These projects have also produced targeted analysis in these areas as the basis for discussion and exchanges with Gulf countries and with the view to work jointly with them towards the achievements of these SDGs.

The most recent project for the region, the enhanced EU-GCC political dialogue, cooperation and outreach was launched at the end of 2020 and started deploying a number of activities in the region in direct relation with SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 10 (Reduced inequality), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). The project helps operationalising EU GCC cooperation in the field of gender equality with several high level bilateral and regional events organised in the region on gender equality. A conference on judicial cooperation and presentation of a web portal on mutual legal assistance was held with Public Prosecution offices, Ministries of Justice of the region and Eurojust giving shape to this long-awaited enhanced cooperation. The project is working with several universities in the region to promote an inclusive and qualitative higher education system.

In terms of SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the Middle East. During the period 2014-2020 there were 2 800 short-term mobilities in both ways, 335 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to students from the Middle East and 5 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021 though there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: 44 students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships, while a university from Iran was awarded with a Jean Monnet Module.

4.2.3.3. Implementation

Within the newly adopted multiannual indicative programme for **Iraq**, the European Commission, adopted a first annual action plan 2021, which will provide support to durable solutions to displacement and other migration challenges as these continue to threaten Iraq's stability and security. This support will target the reform of national systems, especially those relevant to basic service delivery, job creation and governance since these are the most crucial in addressing the needs of returnees and displaced persons. 2021 saw the continuation of the process towards Joint Programming through the adoption of a Team Europe initiative for Iraq on 'Sustainable and inclusive socio-economic perspectives', with the participation of five EU Member States (Germany, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Sweden).

The EU is among the leading development contributors in **Yemen**. Development actions are based on a shared context analysis with humanitarian crisis response and political services to ensure a coherent EU integrated approach to the conflict. The situation in Yemen continues to be fluid. On the political front in 2021, new waves of violence have flared up across the country, plunging the country into deeper economic crisis. In this context of fragility, EU development assistance continued to be implemented through ad hoc special measures to meet evolving needs. So far, the Commission's sizeable development assistance has supported the resilience of the Yemeni population and helped prevent state institutions from collapsing. This approach was reinforced in 2021 with the adoption a special measure in support of basic service provision and early economic recovery. A new project

began implementation in 2021, funded under the thematic line for food security (PROACT), which bridges the divide between humanitarian and development action. This nexus project aims to create graduation models for beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, allowing them to sustain an income and no longer be aid dependent.

The Commission significantly increased its extensive engagement on supporting more than three million Afghan nationals in **Iran** through both UN agencies and international NGOs. This had been driven by a correct assessment in early 2021 that the Taliban would take over in Afghanistan.

Specifically, this work focused on health, education, creation of livelihood and it positively contributed to achieving SDGs 2, 6, 8 and 16. Furthermore, in 2021 significant progress was made in the context of EU Hamoun Wetlands project that aims to create livelihood opportunities in these critical border areas where water scarcity and dust storms are systemic issues. This project contributes to achieve environmental and climate change SDGs where serious challenges remain. After supporting Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade in developing Iran's National Export strategy, 2021 again provided a fresh impetus to the 'EU-Iran Trade Development' project. First, in March 2021, the Europe-Iran Business Forum was held completely virtually. It saw participation of around 4 000 business participants. Secondly, the Commission adopted a EUR 7 million project to prepare for the potential success in restoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA – aka the Iran nuclear deal).

EU projects in the region have supported the operationalisation of EU foreign policy priorities with the **Gulf countries**, supporting country, regional or multi-country actions and dialogues, to deliver tangible results on foreign policy commitments.

The EU GCC Clean Energy Network acts as a catalyst and facilitator for cooperation between EU and GCC countries in the area of clean energy technologies and policies. The topics covered under this project are renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and demand side management, clean natural gas and related technologies, electricity interconnections and market integration, and carbon capture, usage and storage. Climate change and research cooperation are a horizontal theme across these areas.

The project on economic diversification dialogue supports the implementation of the economic diversification strategies in the Gulf region in the context of sustainable development and the commitments by the individual countries to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. The project has been delivering joint, bilateral or regional activities on a number of areas related to trade and investment, circular economy, blue economy, digital economy and youth employment.

Specific initiatives are conducted to provide EU expertise, exchange of best practices and to create opportunities for environmental, technology and business cooperation in areas of common interest.

The Enhanced EU-GCC political dialogue, cooperation and outreach, is a very agile and dynamic instrument actively supporting EU priorities in the region on culture, education, youth and women's empowerment, judiciary, good governance, counterterrorism and the development of people-to-people activities.

4.2.3.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

Iraq

Following the defeat of Da'esh in 2017, 4.9 million internally displaced people returned to their areas of origin in Iraq. However, these returns stagnated over the past two years and 1.18 million Iraqis remain in displacement, with 180 000 internally displaced people remaining in camps. In addition, there are 250 000 Syrian refugees in Iraq. In 2021, 2.4 million people were in acute need.

In 2021, the Commission supported the humanitarian response in Iraq with EUR 28.5 million, including EUR 3.5 million for COVID-19 vaccination campaigns run by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF in camps and informal settlements with the latter targeting over 532 000 vulnerable internally displaced people. In addition to supporting services for internally displaced people and refugee camps, multi-sector assistance was provided to the most vulnerable displaced households living in informal settlements and to education in emergency for displaced children. Given the critical gap in essential documentation particularly for children born in former Da'esh controlled areas, protection programming was prioritised, enabling 65 000 people to access civil documentation to move freely and access basic social and legal services.

Yemen

After seven years of conflict, Yemen remains one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. Over 20 million people need humanitarian assistance, including protection, food and basic healthcare. Four million people in need are internally displaced. In these conditions, COVID-19 has spread across the country leaving an already highly vulnerable population at serious risk. The operating environment remained challenging requiring constant negotiations on access by organisations. Food, fuel and medicine imports remained restricted, largely insufficient and increasingly costly.

In 2021, the Commission allocated EUR 134 million to provide assistance for the direct benefit of approximately 4.3 million people. The COVID-19 response was mainstreamed in actions to mitigate the spread and impact of the pandemic. Furthermore, a common database for emergency and development actors was put in place to enhance interoperability, facilitating the transition from short-term aid to longer-term assistance for beneficiaries. In addition, a new project was developed jointly with UNICEF to provide education to 57 000 displaced children that are out of school. Jointly with Sweden, the Commission has continued to organise donor coordination on Yemen, which has contributed to a united voice among actors in negotiations on humanitarian access.

Syria

The Syria crisis, entering its eleventh year in 2021, left more than 13.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country. EUR 220 million of assistance was allocated to support the most vulnerable impacted by this crisis, including Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. The Commission continued to deliver life-saving assistance and support to millions of people throughout Syria, including across conflict lines and international border crossings. This assistance contributed to the vital delivery of food, medicine, water, and shelter. In neighbouring Lebanon, EU humanitarian funding has contributed to cash assistance for the most vulnerable refugees, secondary healthcare for life-saving cases, non-formal education and shelter including WASH. In Jordan, the Commission supported the most vulnerable refugees in sectors such as health, protection and education.

The Commission was also directly involved in international diplomatic initiatives related to the Syria crisis, such as the fifth conference on ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’ held in Brussels in March 2021, the Humanitarian Task Force of the International Syria Support Group in Geneva, and other advocacy efforts to promote the respect of humanitarian principles and respect of international humanitarian law.

Palestine

Regarding Palestine, the Commission responded to the humanitarian needs resulting from the escalation of Israeli-Palestinian hostilities in May 2021 through the redirection of planned funding and the mobilisation of additional resources. This latest escalation has further exacerbated humanitarian needs in Gaza. It has also increased tensions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, with 2021 seeing an increase in demolitions, confiscations and evictions, affecting Palestinians across the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. A rise in settler violence, especially in the second half of the year, has also been witnessed and is a cause for concern.

4.2.3.5. Crisis response and preparedness

In **Iraq**, the EU continued its support to local mediation efforts and to international efforts to ensure accountability for crimes committed by Da’esh. The work to digitise evidence undertaken by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) will facilitate access to evidentiary material for courts in **Iraq** and in other countries, including EU Member States. Furthermore, a crisis response measure supported the electoral process in **Iraq** with an emphasis on transparency and non-violence.

In **Yemen**, support continued to the United Nations-led peace process and to mediation and stabilisation efforts through existing measures under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace and the NDICI-Global Europe crisis response.

The EU Stabilisation Action under Article 28 in support of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) in **Yemen** aims at contributing to the efforts of UNVIM in the restoration of the unimpeded free flow of commercial items to Yemen through the provision of a transparent and effective clearance process for commercial shipments destined to Yemeni ports which are not under the control of the Government of Yemen. The EU actions were launched in 2018 and are now extended to September 2022.

In **Israel and the Palestinian Territories**, the EU finances two civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) budget: the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) based in Ramallah in the West Bank; and the EU Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah) based in Ramat Gan, Israel.

In the **Middle East**, the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process (EUSR MEPP) is also financed under the CFSP budget. The EUSR MEPP contributes to actions and initiatives leading to a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-State solution.

4.2.4. The Pacific

4.2.4.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The EU has a long-standing engagement in the Pacific region as a major donor and a partner with a shared vision on important global public goods, including environment, climate change, maritime

security and cooperative regional order. The constructive EU engagement and cooperation continued in 2021 with particular focus on how to engage at a more political level with the region under the continued framework of the Cotonou Agreement that was extended until June 2023 pending the signing of the new EU-ACP Partnership Agreement ('post-Cotonou').

The EU's engagement gained a strategic momentum with the adoption of the EU strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (September 2021), that aims to contribute to the region's stability, security, prosperity and sustainable development, and the Joint Communication on Global Gateway⁹⁷ in December 2021, the EU's strategy for sustainable and trusted connections that work for people and the planet.

Throughout 2021, the EU held high-level political dialogues with Samoa and Timor-Leste focusing on developing more political and strategic relationships. The EU also supported regional integration, encouraging Pacific countries to speak and act as one and increasingly engage from region to region.

The EU underlined the importance of the strong and united Pacific Islands Forum as the premier political regional body and advocated for a negotiated solution to avoid the withdrawal of Micronesian states. 2021 saw the EU receiving Permanent Observer status to the Pacific Community – one of our most important partners in implementing EU programmes in the region.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have seen a double shock to the Pacific countries: the health impact that the pandemic has inflicted on the populations; and the economic impact of the containment measures and the drop in tourism, one of the region's main sources of income. The 'Team Europe' response to socio-economic recovery included reorienting funds from existing programmes and frontloading budget support payments. The EU redirected EUR 24 million from existing programmes and reserves for the health response and launched a new Pacific Health Support programme in response to COVID-19 (EUR 22 million).

In 2021, the programming for the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF) was finalised and multiannual indicative programmes (MIPs) were adopted that will allow for substantial engagement with the region on the key priorities: climate change, environment, oceans, good governance, and security (Pacific multi-country MIP, EUR 117 million for 2021-2024; Papua New Guinea MIP, EUR 115 million; and Timor-Leste MIP, EUR 55 million).

4.2.4.2. Working together towards the SDGs

Working better together is the European approach for development cooperation and international partnerships to add value to the EU as a whole in terms of policy dialogue, technical and financial support. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU and its Member States, and the EDFIs, have worked closer than ever, through a 'Team Europe' approach, to improve collective capacity to react and to deliver with stronger impact, and visibility.

Beyond the immediate urgency, to respond to medium and longer-term development challenges, the European actors joined forces to support a recovery that is sustainable, human rights based, inclusive, green, digital, and which strengthens gender equality and boosts human development. Emphasis is made in the Pacific region on green-related SDGs such as Clean water and sanitation

⁹⁷ [JOIN\(2021\) 30 final of 2 December 2021](#).

(SDG 6), Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), Climate action (SDG 13), Life below water (SDG 14), and Life on land (SDG 15).

With regard to SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the Pacific. During the period 2014-2020 there were 2 700 short-term mobilities in both ways, 114 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to students from the Pacific and Oceania and 71 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021, there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: EUR 340 000 have been awarded to the 3 Jean Monnet Modules, 2 Chairs and 1 Center of Excellence selected (all Australian, except one New Zealander Module). There were also 4 Australian associated partners to Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters, while 1 only one student from Fiji, 2 from New Zealand and 6 from Australia received an Erasmus Mundus scholarship.

4.2.4.3. Implementation

CASE STUDIES

Kiwa Initiative in the Pacific region

The Kiwa Initiative is an international initiative bringing together France, the EU, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in a joint programme for the Pacific region with a total budget of EUR 41 million. The initiative aims at increasing the resilience of the Pacific Island Countries against the impacts of climate change, and to protect, restore, and enhance biodiversity through nature-based solutions. In 2021, the first two projects proposed by Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment programme (SPREP) and focussing on climate change resilience in local communities with a total budget close to EUR 10 million started their activities. Three other projects will start in 2022. A call for proposals launched by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for small and medium scale projects triggered 49 proposals submitted by eligible entities such as local authorities and small civil society organisations.

Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade (STREIT) in Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea, the EU's Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade (STREIT) programme continued to make the local economy stronger and more climate-resilient by empowering registered farmer groups and improving the overall investment environment. The project organised the Geographical Indication Awareness Conference (GIAC); observed World Human Rights Days; conducted tailored 'Training-of-Trainers' workshops for 32 government extension service officers; trained 744 lead cocoa and vanilla farmers, including at least 335 young people, established four cocoa budwood gardens, and distributed over 20 000 Cocoa Pod Borer-resistant seedlings; opened saving accounts for engaged cocoa farmers and helped to established a banking agent in the targeted locality. In the fisheries sector, the project identified ten women-led MSMEs for FAO-Thiaroye fish processing techniques, six fish MSMEs for Solar Ice making manufacturing and 56 MSME's fishing groups and businesses for future support. As part of the programme an E-Agriculture strategy was developed, aiming to increasing sustainable and inclusive economic development of rural areas by using digital innovations, with a focus on strengthening effectiveness and efficiency of cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains.

Team Europe initiatives

Team Europe initiative (TEI) - Green Blue Alliance for the Pacific and Timor Leste

Officially launched at a side event in Glasgow at COP26 in November 2021, the key elements of this TEI address climate action across policies with attention to promote equal societies, fundamental values, human development and thus peace and security across 18 countries and OCTs. The EU interest involved the preliminary commitment of several Member States, development agencies and EDFs to achieve a transformative impact.

This Team Europe initiative may also contribute to the EU's action at international and multilateral meetings, such as at the Indo-Pacific Conference.

Team Europe initiative - Forestry-Climate Change-Biodiversity (FCCB) nexus 'Our Forest, Our Future' in Papua New Guinea

This comprehensive action will turn the EU into Papua New Guinea's largest and most visible development partner by far and the partner of reference in this area on top of the EU global agenda. There will be a particular focus on environmental governance and sustainable jobs and growth.

Team Europe initiative – A new Green Deal for Timor-Leste

This action, aiming to bring green economic recovery, will deliver a sizeable impact and make the EU and its Member States a reference partner in the green transformation of the economy in Timor Leste. The action will support a sustainable and inclusive recovery from the devastating effects of COVID-19. It will support the Timorese Government in the implementation of its own economic recovery strategy to make it diversified, greener, inclusive and human centred, using the resources that a digital transformation can bring.

Lessons Learned

2021 continued to be the year of digital meetings which allowed colleagues in Brussels and Delegations to carry on working throughout the pandemic. However, this meant that no face-to-face missions could take place in the Pacific region due to travel bans. Unfortunately, this severely affected capacity building activities (for budget support programmes and indirectly managed programmes) and the existing gap could therefore not be bridged. Only online virtual missions could take place for colleagues in the EU Delegation in Fiji to successfully carry on the implementation of programmes.

At regional level, cooperation continued mainly through projects implemented by regional or international organisations. Relations were further enhanced when the EU became a permanent observer of the Pacific Community (SPC) in August 2021, which is crucial for future relations between the EU and Pacific actors. The announced withdrawal of the Micronesian states from the Pacific Island Forum could impact our relations with this regional body in the future.

Despite serious delays, mainly due to political turmoil and the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the six preconditions and all four eligibility criteria for the first ever Budget Support programme in **Papua New Guinea** were met during 2021. This resulted in a successful payment of the first tranche before the end of the year.

In **Timor-Leste**, budget support disbursements took place for nutrition and public finance management programmes.

4.3. Americas and the Caribbean

4.3.1. Americas

4.3.1.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The **new momentum created in the EU-LAC bi-regional relations** by the ministerial meetings in 2020 was used to intensify high-level political dialogue with the region in 2021. The President of the European Council Charles Michel's personal participation in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit, the only leader of extra-regional partners, was very well received. On 2 December 2021, an EU-LAC Leaders' Meeting took place, with the participation on the EU's side of the leaders of the EU Institutions (President of the Council, of the Commission, and High Representative) and on LAC side of the Heads of State/Government of the 2021 presidencies of the main regional organisations in LAC. The discussion confirmed the relevance of a common agenda focused on a sustainable, digital and inclusive recovery from the pandemic, as set out in the Berlin Ministerial meeting of December 2020 and showed the EU commitment at the highest level to work together with LAC. The LAC region is also a largely like-minded partner in multilateral fora and an important partner at regional and global level.

The **COVID-19 pandemic continued to rage** throughout 2021, affecting the region more severely than any other. With only 8 % of global population, LAC suffered more than 30 % of registered COVID-19 related deaths. The EU exported 125 million COVID-19 vaccines to LAC, and the Team Europe response to the pandemic committed to mobilise EUR 3 billion for emergency response to humanitarian need (including medical equipment), strengthening health, water and sanitation and addressing the social consequences of the crisis.

The **region-to-region dialogue with Central America** continued despite the change to video format. The ratification of the Central American Association Agreement progressed with just one EU Member State left to ratify. The EU renewed and reinforced its sanctions regime against **Nicaragua** as a reaction to blanket repression and election fraud. The intense institutional dialogue agenda with **Cuba** continued. The EU also focused on the aftermath of the social protests of July 2021, which were met with repressive action by the Government.

The double **pressure of COVID-19 and Brexit put the Caribbean region in dire straits**. On the plus side, a political deal was reached on the 'post-Cotonou' Agreement, which will lay the foundation for a renewed relationship with the region, capitalising on the results of current cooperation and fulfilling EU geopolitical ambition. The Caribbean Protocol reflects the extent to which priorities are aligned with common action focused on: fighting climate change and fostering green growth, modernising economies, creating employment and advancing connectivity through digitalisation, working together for peace and security, and the promotion of human rights.

Work continued towards the conclusion and signature of the EU Association Agreements with **Mercosur** (the Common Market of South America), and **Chile**, as well as with Mexico on the modernisation of the Global Agreement. These agreements are crucial to revitalise our relationship, promote common values and the economic recovery on both sides of the Atlantic.

In line with the EU efforts in support of a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis in **Venezuela**, an EU electoral observation mission (EOM) was deployed to the regional and local elections of 21 November. The EU continued its diplomatic role in the crisis maintaining a diplomatic presence and dialogue with all parties in Venezuela, supporting meaningful, pragmatic and inclusive negotiations in the context of the Mexico talks with a view to a democratic transition. The EU reached out to the

main international actors to promote a concerted international engagement. Several meetings of the International Contact Group were organised. The EU has also sent an EU Election Expert Mission to the parliamentary and presidential elections in **Peru**. In **Colombia**, political and financial support to the implementation of the peace process that commemorated its 5th anniversary remained key in the EU's strengthened partnership. A new Memorandum of Understanding reinforcing and enlarging the EU's political and sectorial dialogue and cooperation with Columbia to new areas, notably environment and sustainable development, was signed in September. For the first time since the pandemic, the HRVP travelled to Latin America in November 2021 including a visit to **Brazil and Peru** in order to give a new impetus to the EU's engagement with the region. In Peru, which was most affected by COVID-19 in terms of deaths (as a percentage of the population), the HRVP wanted to show the EU's full support to the country. In Brazil, the visit demonstrated the EU commitment to this key strategic partner, including a critical engagement on environmental issues.

4.3.1.2. Working together towards the SDGs

Throughout 2021, the EU continued to assist countries and regional organisation to work towards the SDGs. At the informal **EU-Latin America and the Caribbean ministerial meeting** of 14 December 2020, Ministers had agreed that the COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to '**build back better**' in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to **join forces to develop green and digital partnerships**.

Programmes and projects continued addressing pressing challenges such as **climate change, security** and the **rule of law**, investments for **growth and jobs**, and **governance**.

Team Europe supported facilities such as COVAX (over EUR 3 billion) enabled the delivery of over 460 million doses of vaccines to 144 countries worldwide.

Country and regional **Team Europe initiatives** (TEIs) are well underway. TEIs cover issues of strategic priority for the EU and its partners in relation to Global Gateway, the Green Deal, human development, sustainable jobs, growth and regional economic integration, governance, peace and security, and the digital agenda.

Through the **Erasmus+ programme**, the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the whole Americas region. During the period 2014-2020 there were 22 000 short-term mobilities in both ways, 2 825 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to American students, and 92 capacity-building projects and 163 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the three regions.

In 2021 though there were exceptionally only 2 Erasmus+ calls opened for the region: EUR 700 000 have been awarded to the 6 Jean Monnet Modules, 6 Chairs and 3 Centers of Excellence selected (including the first Jean Monnet Chair ever for Ecuador). There were also 3 full partners and 40 associated partners in Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters from North America and Latin America, while 637 students received Erasmus Mundus scholarships (with Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and the USA in the top-10 of global recipients).

4.3.1.3. Implementation

Countries in Latin America benefitted from programmes in key sectors such as water and climate change; education; sustainable growth and jobs; food security; private sector and investment;

economic development; security, rule of law, and governance. Regional programmes remained crucial for strengthening the impact of the EU-LA partnership.

Programmes funded under the former Partnership Instrument (PI) continued to support the EU's political cooperation with the Americas at country, multi-country and regional levels. PI-funded projects contributed to almost all priority areas identified in the EU-LAC Joint Communication⁹⁸, in particular creating a level playing field for EU companies, promoting the uptake of European technical standards, facilitating LAC countries' commitment to the climate and environment agenda, building partnerships between local authorities in the continent and in the EU, communicating the EU's policies and values, sharing Europe's best practices, and strengthening people to people contacts between both regions.

The region hosts over 50 % of the planet's biodiversity, 57 % of primary tropical forest and some of the world's most important marine ecosystems. Climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss will have a huge impact on one of the most unequal regions in the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded further the deforestation and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources.

Post-COVID-19 recovery presents the EU with an unprecedented opportunity to engage with LAC partners, many of whom are strong allies in multilateral fora on climate change and biodiversity, to ensure a socially just and green recovery, in line with the EU Green Deal.

In 2021, the EU efforts to consolidate broader and deeper climate partnerships with the LAC region met with success. EUROCLIMA+ made further progress in launching country dialogues and implementing initiatives, adopting a 'green recovery' approach. The Team Europe initiative for the Amazon Basin was launched. This aims to address forest fires and deforestation and provide support to indigenous rights. The regional blending facilities and the new guarantees under the EFSD+ also support the Green agenda.

The Regional Blending Facilities, the Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF) and the Caribbean Investment Facility (CIF), mainly geared towards environmental sustainability, climate change, and sustainable growth and jobs, tailored financing in the COVID-19 context. These were important assets in responding to specific needs at country and regional level. Eleven blending projects were signed in 2021 for EU contributions of, respectively, EUR 62.6 million under LAIF and EUR 20.8 million under CIF.

The AL INVEST Verde programme started its operations at the end of 2021 to support the transition towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient and a more circular economy in Latin America (EUR 33 million). Another EU flagship in the region, the Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action, also continued to support the Green Transition, as well as enhancing access of EU SMEs to markets across the Americas (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Canada, EUR 20 million).

In the area of security and the fight against organised crime, the EL PACCTO programme continued to build momentum for a bi-regional partnership on security matters, progressively building bridges between the justice, law enforcement and penitentiary institutions on both continents. The programme positively contributed to position the EU as one of the main security partners in the region, inspiring a regional Team Europe initiative on justice and security.

⁹⁸ [JOIN\(2019\) 6 final of 16 April 2019](#) and the ensuing [Council Conclusions 9241/19 of 13 May, 2019](#).

The EU Trust Fund for Colombia continued to support the implementation of the peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC. It translated the EU’s political support to the Peace Agreement. The Trust Fund supported 35 projects for a total amount of EUR 130 million. Main results achieved are in the area of sustainable rural development and socio-economic reintegration of former FARC-EP⁹⁹ combatants. Equally, specific initiatives focusing on the work of the Truth Commission and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Special Investigation Unit and the Search Unit for Missing Persons accompanied the implementation of the peace agreement and reinforced the transitional justice system.

In Central America and Mexico, 2021 was marked by a difficult socio-political context compounded by the COVID-19 crisis. The EU is contributing to the Regional Contingency Plan against COVID-19 and coordinates EUR 261 million of COVID-19 EU response funding for the region including actions for health support and socio-economic recovery. The EU continued to strengthen its partnership with Mexico through enhanced cooperation.

In terms of new initiatives, EUR 100 million is being invested into domestic revenue mobilisation for inclusive growth, the promotion of decent employment, gender equality and women’s empowerment, climate change, green recovery and sustainable forestry, and the Central America Digital Trade Platform.

CASE STUDY

Colombia Sustainable local development in support of the Peace Agreement and biodiversity

Legal and sustainable economic activities in rural areas of Colombia are key to guaranteeing viable economic development in territories traditionally affected by violence and crops for illicit use, as well as other activities such as illegal mining and deforestation. The majority of post-conflict areas have a very high environmental relevance.

The programme has contributed to the rehabilitation and recovery of 27 801 hectares in and around the National Natural Parks System. 1 390 land-use, occupation and/or property agreements/titles were signed with local peasant and fishing communities. 305 local green businesses (handicrafts, agri-ecology, non-timber forest products and eco-tourism) are supported to improve their organisational structure and commercial viability in line with environmental criteria. Over 4 500 indigenous, peasant and vulnerable families have benefited from the programme.

⁹⁹ Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo



©Efrain Molano/National Natural Parks. 2021

4.3.1.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

The situation in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has been marked in 2021 by growing humanitarian crises, critically impacted by COVID-19 and its collateral effects in terms of vulnerability, violence as well as irregularity and exclusion of the more than 16 million migrants and refugees in the region. Indigenous populations have been particularly affected by the pandemic. In 2021, for the very first time, the region reported six humanitarian response plans published together with the regional response plan to the Venezuela migration crisis. In total, the EU allocated EUR 150 million in 2021 for this region, out of which EUR 16 million was used to respond to the multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on indigenous communities across South America.

Venezuela

In 2021, Venezuela's socio-economic and political crisis continued unabated, with severe humanitarian consequences inside the country and spill-over effects regionally, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating displacement, as well as humanitarian needs for basic services of health, water, sanitation, hygiene, food, education and protection. Reports by local organisations showed a dramatic deterioration in the overall living conditions with over 14 million people in need. Around six million Venezuelans have left their country since the beginning of the crisis. This exodus is one of Latin America's largest mass population movements in history. In response to the growing needs triggered by the Venezuela crisis, the EU allocated in 2021 a record amount of EUR 82 million, supporting around two million people with multi-sector relief operations. The majority of the humanitarian funds were deployed inside Venezuela, but aid was also provided to Venezuelan migrants and refugees as well as to host communities in neighbouring countries. In 2021, the EU remained the leading donor in the response to the humanitarian crisis inside Venezuela, not only in terms of volume of funding, but also in terms of humanitarian diplomacy, including through the Humanitarian Assistance working group of the International Contact Group (ICG) for Venezuela.

Colombia

The humanitarian situation in Colombia deteriorated sharply in 2021 because of the escalating internal conflict, compounded by the impact of the 1.8 million Venezuelan refugees in the country. Border areas with Venezuela and the Pacific coast have been particularly affected by increasing levels of violence. In Colombia, together with the emergency support provided in response to the Venezuela migration and refugee crisis, the EU also provided emergency relief to those affected by internal violence, displacement and restrictions of movement, particularly Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities (with EUR 10 million allocated in 2021) as well as those affected by COVID-19 and natural hazards. In 2021, the total number of beneficiaries reached by Commission-funded partners amounted to 915 000 individuals.

Central America

In 2021, the Central America region continued to bear the effects of high exposure to natural hazards and epidemics, endemic poverty as well as complex socio-economic and political situations and social unrest. In 2021, 8.3 million persons (25 % of the total population) in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador needed humanitarian assistance, with main drivers being increased internal displacement (1.7 million people affected), human rights violations and increasing transcontinental and extra-continental population movements. For example, the number of people transiting through the Darien Gap in Panama increasing dramatically during 2021 with more than 130 000 persons reported.

In 2021, EU's response of EUR 12.6 million targeted around 860 000 beneficiaries, focusing on addressing the critical needs of the most vulnerable victims and survivors of organised violence, notably women and children, through protection and relief assistance, provision of food assistance and short- to medium-term livelihood recovery and protection, and multi-sectoral approaches incorporating disaster preparedness to improve capacities for rapid response and early action.

4.3.1.5. Crisis response and preparedness

As **Latin America** continued to face the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing crisis in **Venezuela**, the EU continued its support to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations with an emphasis on reducing the risk of tensions between migrants and host communities through crisis response actions. Crisis response actions were also mobilised to support peaceful elections in **Honduras** as well as to maintain EU support to the peace processes in **Colombia**, with a particular focus on the part of the Peace Agreement that concerns the Victims of the Conflict. This includes support to the Special Jurisdiction for Peace as well as the Colombian Truth Commission.

Through financing via the CFSP budget, the EU is supporting a project implemented by the Organisation of American States (OAS) aimed at countering the illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms, light weapons and ammunition, and at mitigating their impact in LAC. This is done in the framework of the EU strategy against illicit firearms, small arms and light weapons and their ammunition: 'Securing Arms, Protecting Citizens'.

The EU's **Global Illicit Flows programme (GIFP)** flagship initiative continued to support partner countries' efforts to tackle international organised crime flows. A successful example of interdiction is the Trigger VI action led by Interpol in cooperation with UNODC in **13 South American countries**, which led to the recovery of around 200 000 illicit firearms, ammunition and explosives, the arrest of almost 4 000 individuals and the destruction of 27 cocaine labs. The GIFP, as an EU external action

mechanism, assists partner countries' law enforcement and criminal justice authorities in their efforts to tackle transnational organised crime, be it in relation to narcotics, illicit arms trafficking, wildlife crime or illicit financial flows.

4.3.2. The Caribbean

4.3.2.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The negotiated text of the new EU-OCAPS Agreement ('post-Cotonou') was initialled on 15 April 2021, which opened the way for the formal approval process. It will succeed the Cotonou Agreement once both sides complete their internal procedures for signature and conclusion. The new agreement will contain a Caribbean Protocol, which builds upon the 2012 joint EU-Caribbean partnership strategy and allows for an unprecedented regional focus with dedicated institutions. This is a real opportunity to deepen the relations between the EU and the Caribbean, allowing the partnership to become more political, on the basis of key common interests such as economic resilience, climate, human rights, peace and security, and defending multilateralism. The protocol is a tool to help the region address its key vulnerabilities: environmental (exposure to natural disasters and climate change), economic (small, non-diversified economies with limited access to resources), and social (inequalities, crime and security challenges due to being located on major drug trafficking routes). It may also facilitate forging a strong relationship with the region post Brexit, seizing the opportunity to create new linkages between the EU27 and the Caribbean countries in commercial, cultural and political areas.

4.3.2.2. Working together towards the SDGs

The EU continued to support the Caribbean in working towards the SDGs using a variety of instruments. An important focus of that support in 2021 has been the region's post-pandemic economic recovery. In 2021, the vulnerability of the Caribbean region to external shocks has remained high. The governments' fiscal position has deteriorated and the debt-to-GDP ratio increased. This had an adverse effect on the capacity of the countries to invest and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Six EU budget support operations in the region provided EUR 22 million. Examples of operations are creating decent employment in Saint Lucia (SDG 8), enhancing social protection for the most vulnerable in Barbados (SDG 1), tackling climate change challenges in Guyana and Jamaica (SDG 7 and 15), and enhancing governance efficiency in the Dominican Republic (SDG 1 and 16). A new blending operation will provide affordable financing to public sector counterparts for investment in water supply and waste management, both essential for improving the region's climate resilience and public health.

Addressing health coverage and limiting COVID-19 related mortality has been an important challenge in the region. EU support to the Caribbean Public Health Agency has enabled access to protection material, medical and laboratory equipment, and COVID-19 tests and treatments. Via the COVAX Facility, EUR 2.2 million was transferred to Member States of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for the acquisition of vaccines. The Caribbean countries were provided with over 650 000 doses in 2021. At local level, the EU provided support in strengthening healthcare systems with new actions in Haiti (EU grant of EUR 1.3 million), Cuba (EU blending operation) and Barbados (EUR 50 million via an EIB loan). Two blending operations are ongoing in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

In 2021, the EU reinforced its engagement on resilience, crisis preparedness and response. The EU ensured a timely response in the aftermath of the earthquake in the South of Haiti that caused over

2 000 casualties and left 600 000 people affected. In response to the earthquake, the EU mobilised all the different emergency tools at its disposal, including the EUCPM. Humanitarian aid was distributed and following a nexus approach a new EUR 10 million action was put into place to support the most vulnerable households through resilient agriculture and food security.

Gender equality issues and gender violence have seen particular attention, with an important EU engagement to stimulate policy reforms and actions at regional and local level to raise awareness and enhance victim protection.

4.3.2.3. Implementation

The joint Caribbean-EU priorities are outlined in the Caribbean Protocol of the ‘post-Cotonou’ Agreement. In 2021, they were substantiated with the adoption of the Caribbean Window under the Regional MIP 2021-2027 for the Americas and with the MIPs for Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica and Suriname. In particular, the Caribbean window (EUR 208 million) is shaped around three Caribbean-EU partnerships jointly agreed with the region: the Green Deal; Economic resilience and trade; and Governance, security and human development.

To fast track the implementation on pressing political priorities for the region and the EU, new regional programmes have been adopted under the Caribbean Window in 2021 on the Green Deal (Euroclima Caribbean) and Digital Transformation (EU-LAC Digital Alliance). These will be linked to regional Team Europe initiatives, the design of which begin in 2022. The Caribbean Cooperation Facility will enable the EU to respond to the needs and demands of the Caribbean partner countries.

The EU in its ‘Team Europe’ approach continued to deliver in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Caribbean, though the mobilisation of resources as defined in 2020. Through the build-back-better approach promoted in the Caribbean by the EU since 2017 following the Irma and Maria hurricanes, the EU is supporting the region in recovering from the current crisis through a mix of health, economic and social interventions.

CASE STUDY

Programme for Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Guyana (SDG 13)

Guyana has a low-lying coastline of approximately 459 km. The system of sea defences covers about 80 % of Guyana’s coastline. The majority of the population live along the narrow, cultivated coastal strip which lies below sea level. Guyana’s sea and river defence infrastructure systems are highly vulnerable to climate change. Maintenance of the sea defence systems is therefore essential to protect the population and the livelihoods of rural families.

The programme is about climate change adaptation to protect the population in vulnerable, flood prone areas below sea level. The EU support contributed to the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of the sea defences in critical locations. It also enabled investment in nature-based sea defences and urban storm water drainage management was improved. The integrated coastal management framework was strengthened with increased representation of women in the Sea and River Defence Board, the development of six regional Multi-Hazard Preparedness and Response Plans, and 24 Community Based Disaster Risk Management Plans.



The EU helped protect nearly 100 kilometres of coastal zones in Guyana. © Federico Suarez.

4.3.2.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

Haiti

At the beginning of 2021, 4.4 million Haitians were already in need of humanitarian assistance, suffering from a large-scale food crisis. Political upheavals, social tensions, insecurity, climate hazards and other factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to the further deterioration of the coping capacities of the already vulnerable population. The overall situation was aggravated following the earthquake affecting the Southwestern part of the island, which affected 800 000 people. Since June 2021, violence and territorial disputes between armed gangs in the urban area of Port-au-Prince have increased significantly, with more than 19 000 internally displaced people registered facing severe protection threats and serious humanitarian access constraints.

Against this background, the EU has mobilised EUR 17 million in 2021 to mitigate the acute food insecurity in the country and to assist and protect victims of violence. With these funds, the EU also invested in disaster preparedness in a country which is particularly exposed to multiple sudden onset natural and climatic disasters and mobilised emergency funding following the 14 August earthquake. To respond to the earthquake the EU used all the different tools at its disposal, including the activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and two EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations. Commissioner Lenarčič visited Haiti on 16 and 17 September 2021.

The Caribbean

In the Caribbean, the entire population of 45 million people is highly exposed to natural hazards, including stronger tropical storms, hurricanes, earthquakes, longer lasting droughts, and volcanic eruptions, now aggravated by the effects of climate change. The socio-economic crisis derived from the pandemic has provoked a dramatic increase in food insecurity: 10 million people are moderately food insecure and one million are severely food insecure, especially in the Dominican Republic and Cuba.

In 2021, together with the emergency assistance provided in response to the Soufrière volcanic eruption, the EU has remained engaged to support resilience and disaster preparedness in the region for a total of EUR 3 million. The overall objective has been to support Regional, National and Local Disaster Risk Management organisations as well as to strengthen vulnerable communities' preparedness and resilience in a region that is highly exposed to multiple sudden onset natural and climatic disasters.

In addition, the EU has also supported emergency response ensuring protection, education and life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Venezuelan refugee and migrant populations in the Caribbean. In response to the pandemic the EU has supported the emergency response in health and sanitation in Cuba and in the Dominican Republic (EUR 2 million).

4.3.2.5. Crisis response and preparedness

In the Caribbean, actions continued on the engagement with the local civil society to cultivate leadership for community mediation and peacebuilding in vulnerable communities in **Haiti** under the 2014-2020 Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

4.4. European Neighbourhood

4.4.1. European Neighbourhood East

4.4.1.1. Introduction (policy developments)

During 2021 the EU continued to develop its relations with eastern partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) both bilaterally and regionally under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and under the Eastern Partnership (EaP) framework. The Lukashenka regime chose to suspend their participation in the Eastern Partnership framework, however cooperation avenues continue in order to support Belarusian civil society and citizens. At the same time, the EU observed with growing concern the security situation at Ukraine's borders and fully supported Ukraine in its efforts to seek exclusively diplomatic and legal means to resolve the conflict with Russia.

Both the ENP and the EaP are based on common values, mutual interests, and the principles of shared ownership, responsibility, differentiation, inclusivity and mutual accountability.

The publication of the Joint Communication Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all¹⁰⁰ in March 2020 was followed by a Joint Staff Working Document 'Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities'¹⁰¹ in July 2021, further outlining elements of the new agenda which was endorsed at the Eastern Partnership Summit on 15 December 2021. The new approach is based on recovery, resilience and reform, with the overriding policy objective of strengthening resilience under two pillars: governance and investment (including a EUR 2.3 billion economic and investment plan, with a potential to leverage public and private investments of up to EUR 17 billion). The five long-term policy objectives in key priority areas are: economy and connectivity; rule of law and security; environment and climate; digital; and fair and inclusive societies. The EU's support to EaP countries will continue to be conditional upon the implementation of agreed structural reforms, particularly in the areas of rule of law, justice and anti-corruption.

In 2021, particularly in the first half of the year, Armenia's political situation was heavily affected by the aftermath of the hostilities in and around Nagorno Karabakh. Following a period of political volatility, early parliamentary elections were conducted on 20 June, which the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institution and Human Rights (ODIHR) Election Observation Mission assessed as competitive and generally well-managed within a short timeframe. The re-elected Government has committed to continue with its reform agenda, however the pace of implementation lagged behind. Regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the EU remained actively engaged including through the efforts of President of the European Council Michel in political efforts to overcome conflict, create cooperation and an atmosphere of trust between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with a view to sustainable peace in the region ultimately underpinned by a comprehensive peace agreement. The EU and Armenia maintained an active political dialogue, including on issues of democracy, rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights.

The post 44-day war situation marked the Azerbaijani political developments in 2021. The situation remains fragile with clashes along the international border continuing to occur. The EU remains actively engaged in supporting a peaceful resolution through the personal efforts of the President of

¹⁰⁰ [JOIN\(2020\) 7 final of 18 March 2020.](#)

¹⁰¹ [SWD\(2021\) 186 final of 2 July 2021.](#)

the European Council, the continued support of the HRVP and of the EU Special Representative for the Southern Caucasus and Georgia. Cooperation on connectivity has continued to play an important role. Azerbaijan remains the EU's strategic energy partner. Following the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) between Azerbaijan and Europe (30 December 2020) the deliveries of gas to Europe continued. The negotiations of the new EU-Azerbaijan agreement are back on the bilateral agenda since Azerbaijan presented their revised negotiation position for the trade part of the agreement in July 2021. The Azerbaijani economy has continued to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Belarus, the repression of all segments of Belarusian society continued. The Lukashenka regime's brutal repression throughout 2021 resulted in more than 900 political prisoners, thousands of arbitrarily detained citizens, and over 300 civil society organisations were closed down or were in the process of forced liquidation. Tens of thousands left the country, including the majority of the democratic opposition, activists and independent journalists. With the forced landing of a Ryanair flight in May 2021 and with the state-organised instrumentalisation of thousands of vulnerable migrants for political purposes, the Lukashenka regime's violations of international law and norms became a threat to regional security. The EU has been in the forefront of international reaction and imposed sanctions against individuals and entities responsible for continuous human rights violations, breaching international aviation safety and instrumentalising migrants. The EU continued to limit its cooperation with Belarusian authorities to the issues of interest to the EU and Belarusian society. At the same time, it substantially stepped-up support to civil society, victims of the repression and defenders of human rights and democracy. The EU outlined a EUR 3 billion comprehensive plan of economic support to a future democratic Belarus, a clear signal of the EU's long-term commitment to the sovereignty and prosperity of the Belarusian people.

Georgia's domestic political situation continues to be characterised by deep polarisation. With a view to supporting the parties in identifying a way out of the political impasse, the EU mediated the crisis leading the parties to sign up to the '19 April Agreement'. This ended the parliamentary boycott, but tensions resumed after the Georgian Dream ruling party withdrew from the agreement. The October 2021 local elections were assessed by OSCE/ODIHR as overall well administered but with significant shortcomings and polarisation, also aggravated by the arrest and detention of former President Saakashvili. Most of the reforms in the April 19 Agreement to which the parties committed have not materialised, in particular reforms of the justice sector, which has also seen backsliding. The parliamentary boycott by some opposition parties after the 2020 parliamentary elections ended. The overall implementation of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement is progressing in many sectoral areas and Georgia continues to benefit from its Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). Economic growth returned sharply in 2021 as Georgia rebounded from the pandemic, with an increase in GDP of over 10 %.

In the Republic of Moldova, the outcome of the parliamentary elections in 2021 has aligned all the main institutions on a common pro-reform agenda and has brought a positive perspective for the required structural reforms in line with the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and DCFTA. The new leadership started its mandate by focusing on reforms, particularly rooting out corruption and improving the justice sector, and took immediate action to catch up on the implementation of some key areas of the Association Agreement, enabling European financing for Moldova to be unblocked. Also, the COVID-19 MFA operation has been successfully completed with the disbursement of the second instalment of EUR 50 million in October 2021. Progress was impacted by the challenges of the

COVID-19 pandemic and capacity (weak institutional and human resources in the public administration) and was followed by a gas/energy crisis in the autumn, engineered by Russia. EU-Moldova relations visibly intensified in the last months of the year and strong EU support was provided to help Moldova in the context of the gas crisis.

Ukraine continued reform efforts in 2021, despite growing security concerns due to sustained Russian military build-up in and around its borders. Notably anti-corruption institutions were strengthened with the passing of two key laws on reforming and cleansing the High Council of Justice (HCJ) and the High Qualification Commission of Judges (HQCJ). Two commissions with international experts, the HCJ Ethics Commission and the HQCJ, were created, which if implemented properly could lead to a fundamental renewal of the judiciary. The EU, together with international partners, in particular the G7, continued to support the reform of the judiciary as a priority, however the Constitutional Court of Ukraine still remained unreformed. While acknowledging satisfactory implementation of structural measures agreed with the authorities, the COVID-19 MFA operation for Ukraine could be concluded with the disbursement of the second instalment of EUR 600 million in October 2021. The EU consistently maintained an active dialogue with Ukraine at the highest political level. This included the physical Summit in Kyiv in October 2021. The EU passed a strong message of support on the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the face of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in the east of the country.

4.4.1.2. Working together towards the SDGs

The Eastern Partnership aims to strengthen political and economic relations and helps partners in achieving the twin ecological and digital transformations, and is based on common values, mutual interests and shared ownership and responsibility. Through the new agenda presented in July 2021 via the Joint Staff Working Document ‘Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities’¹⁰² and endorsed at the Summit in December 2021, the Eastern Partnership continues to support the delivery of the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

In the Eastern Neighbourhood the external actions implemented, in cooperation and coordination with Partner Countries and other stakeholders, aim to assist recovery, strengthen resilience and support reform. These actions underpin the political priorities of the Commission in achieving the SDGs as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact implementation of EU funded projects and programmes across the Eastern Partnership. The EU put in place additional support for partner countries to fight the pandemic and support mass vaccination, both through technical support with the WHO (EUR 40 million programme on vaccine preparedness and deployment and the EUR 35 million EU Solidarity for Health Initiative) as well as provision of vaccines through a Team Europe initiative coordinated by Poland (EUR 35 million). These actions ensured equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and supported an effective response against COVID-19 while contributing to SDG 3 and longer-term socio-economic and health resilience.

On the regional level the EUR 9.7 million ‘EU4Gender Equality’ programme 2020-2023 aims to strengthen equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the Eastern Neighbourhood by challenging gender stereotypes, work on violence prevention and championing men’s participation in

¹⁰² [SWD\(2021\) 186 final of 2 July 2021](#).

care work. The programme also includes a Reform Helpdesk that supports governments' reform work towards equal opportunities for women and men and contributes to SDG 5.

The EU Water Initiative Plus programme (completed in mid-2021) delivered hundreds of knowledge products and modernised nine water laboratories and contributed to SDG 6. Some forty surveys were carried out in rivers, ground and coastal waters, covering more than one thousand sites. Due to this support, water monitoring in the EaP region is now closer to EU standards. The implementation of national policies and strategies at local level progressed through the development of management plans for eleven pilot river basins. Such plans identify targeted measures to improve water quality and efficient water use, estimate the costs of the measures, and provide indicators to monitor their implementation in the mid-term. More than ten thousand people have been directly involved in project activities through national policy dialogues, public consultations, numerous outreach events, and capacity-building activities.

The EU is contributing to develop energy resilience in the Eastern Neighbourhood, through focusing in parallel on energy and climate policies. Reducing energy dependency, in particular in Moldova and Ukraine, through green finance, diversification of energy sources and routes, and securing supply by promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy. Investments in infrastructure for energy and transport interconnectivity between EaP countries and the EU also address infrastructure vulnerability to the impact of climate change, environmental challenges and hybrid threats contributing to SDG 7.

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, the EU funded one hundred and eleven projects under the EU4Business umbrella initiative to support small and medium-sized enterprises to access finance, business development services and business enabling environments. By joining forces with International Financial Institutions and other European and local partners, the EU promoted diversification of trade, support to the green and digital transitions and creation of quality jobs, thus contributing to SDG 8.

The EU supported strong cooperation networks among Eastern Partnership countries to foster the development of resilient digital economies and societies and this contributes to SDG 9. Through its umbrella programme EU4Digital, the EU launched six pilot projects in the fields of e-commerce, e-customs and e-signature, and produced guidelines to strengthen start-up ecosystems, cyber-security, and the take up of digital solutions in the innovation and health sectors. In addition, prices for high-speed international connectivity in the fields of research and education were reduced by more than 70 % in the region and more than three hundred and nine research and education institutions benefited from high-speed internet to collaborate with their European counterparts in the context of the EaPConnect programme.

The number of Covenant of Mayors (CoM) East signatories almost doubled from 257 to 493 within the last five years. As a result, the network now covers more than 45 % of the population. Moreover, close to 75 % of these municipalities (360) have committed to the ambitious target of a 30 % reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2030. In addition, within the framework of the regional programme for Sustainable Urban Demonstration Projects (SUDeP) complementing the CoM East initiative, 392 projects have undergone energy efficiency measures or moved to renewable energy, including schools, kindergartens, district heating systems and street lighting systems, benefitting directly over 520 000 users. This resulted in savings of almost EUR 2.19 million per year and contributed to SDG 11.

The EU supports partner countries to transform the region towards modern, resource-efficient, clean, circular and competitive economies, while increasing their environmental and climate resilience, including through more sustainable use of natural resources and contributes to SDG 13. The programmes implemented support the EaP to meet the challenges of increasing the resource-efficiency of economies; developing new green jobs and economic opportunities linked to the green transition; development of local and renewable sources of energy; and managing natural assets to maximise sustainability. In the area of climate action, the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P) supports municipal investments in energy efficiency and environmental projects. Within the framework of this Fund, the EBRD has extended a EUR 20 million sovereign loan to Armenia for the benefit of the Yerevan Bus Company to acquire 100 smart energy-efficient buses to reduce congestion and air pollution.

The EU programme for Improving Environmental Monitoring in the Black Sea (EU4EMBLAS) aims at improving environmental monitoring in the Black Sea. During 2021, 38 tons of waste were collected by school pupils from Ukraine through the EU funded Clean Beach campaign and contributed to SDG 14.

With regard to SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the Eastern Partnership. During the period 2014-2020, there were more than 43 000 short-term mobilities (students and staff) planned and around 100 000 youth exchanges organized with the region. 597 Erasmus Mundus scholarships were allocated to students from the region, and 123 capacity-building in higher education projects coordinated by higher education institutions in the region and 183 Jean Monnet projects were selected with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021 there were limited calls open for the regions outside the EU. 34 students from the region were selected for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master scholarships. In Jean Monnet Actions, in total 41 projects with applicants from the region were selected. Organisations from the Eastern Partnership are involved in two Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges projects selected from the call 2021.

CASE STUDIES

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| <p>Involved fatherhood - right from the start (SDG 5)</p> <p>The three-year programme EU 4 Gender Equality: Together against Gender Stereotypes and Gender-Based Violence, funded by the EU and implemented jointly by UN Women and UNFPA, seeks to strengthen equal rights and opportunities for women and men by shifting social perceptions around gender roles, tackling gender stereotypes, increasing men’s participation in childcare and other domestic responsibilities.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>One main objective is to support men in the Eastern Partnership countries to become more involved parents, by launching dynamic father-friendly spaces called ‘Father Clubs’, communication campaigns and trainings.</p> |
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Father Day in Kyiv. ©UNFPA Ukraine/Andrii Kriepkyh.

Results

During 2020 and 2021, almost 2 100 men benefited from 19 ‘Fathers’ Clubs’ established in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. In addition, more than 2.4 million people were reached by communication campaigns spreading messages about the importance of men’s caretaking responsibilities. More than 300 health professionals and family centre specialists received knowledge and skills on engaging men during pregnancy and childbirth and on promoting active fatherhood.

Bringing South Caucasus one click away from the European market (SDG 8)

E-commerce has developed dramatically in the last decade and especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help companies grow in this new reality, the three-year EU-funded programme EU4Digital Facility launched three pilot programmes to support small and medium-sized enterprises from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in selling local products to European marketplaces.

Objectives

The pilots aimed at establishing national ‘virtual warehouses’ in the participating countries, in which sellers can store key information about their products for the electronic exchange of cross-border data between retailers, marketplaces, delivery operators and customs. The system supported small businesses in placing their products for sale on well-known online platforms in Germany and in completing timely cross-border delivery.

Impact

Companies from Armenia (a sock designer), Azerbaijan (a seller of handcrafted wooden accessories), Georgia (two women-led businesses producing children’s clothing and eco-friendly housewarming gifts) successfully sold their products to Germany and familiarised themselves with the new EU legislation on e-commerce. The ‘virtual warehouse’ solution can now be expanded to other Eastern

partner countries, to facilitate trade with the EU as well as up to 192 countries using the same standards within the Universal Postal Union.

Recognition of the Ukrainian digital COVID-19 certificate (SDG 9)

The Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine requested support to develop an international digital COVID-19 certificate for Ukrainian citizens, which would be recognised by the EU. The EU Delegation to Ukraine and the EU4DigitalUA project responded promptly and provided their support to develop the needed certificate in line with the EU approach to its own certificates. The EU recognition of the Ukrainian digital certificate is based on the equivalence Decision by the European Commission adopted on 19 August 2021¹⁰³ and operational as of 20 August 2021.

Objective

The objective of the EU4Digital programme is to support e-services development and re-engineering, strengthening interoperability and digital government infrastructure to provide more and better public electronic services by the Ukrainian Government.

Impact

Ukraine's international digital COVID-19 certificate is fully recognised by the EU: Ukrainian citizens holding the certificate can use it under the same conditions as holders of an EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate. Ukraine is among the first non-EU countries and the first European Neighbourhood country whose digital COVID-19 certificate is recognised by the EU. As a matter of reciprocity, Ukraine has also agreed to accept the EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate for travel from the EU. Ukraine's participation in the EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate facilitates safe travel to and from the EU.

4.4.1.3. Implementation

Human Development

Fostering resilient, gender-equal, fair and inclusive societies is one of the key priorities of the renewed Eastern Partnership agenda. The EU, its Member States and the Eastern Partner countries expressed strong political commitment by endorsing the post-2020 priorities at the Eastern Partnership Summit in December 2021. Reflecting this political key guidance, supporting civil society, independent media, youth participation in democracy, people-to-people contacts, gender equality and health resilience are core goals of the EU's regional and bilateral financial assistance. In early 2021 a EUR 7.85 million regional project EU4Culture started its implementation in all six EaP countries. The aim is to support culture's role as an engine for growth and social development across the region. Through its interregional approach, the project promotes intercultural dialogue and knowledge exchange, and contributes to improving local governance in the culture sector through support for regulatory processes and participative policy dialogue.

¹⁰³ [Commission Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2021/1380 of 19 August 2021](#) establishing the equivalence, for the purpose of facilitating the right of free movement within the Union, of COVID-19 certificates issued by Ukraine to the certificates issued in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2021/953 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Text with EEA relevance).

The regional EU4Youth programme entered its third phase in 2021 with the signature of a EUR 14.4 million agreement with the Central Project Management Agency of Lithuania. EU4Youth phase III focusses on youth employment and entrepreneurship, including a grant scheme for projects on digital and green aspects, and a component to continue capacity building of Public Employment Services and other key stakeholders around the EU Youth Guarantee experience. Scholarships for students to study at the College of Europe in Natolin are also included in the programme. Also in 2021 the 5th Eastern Partnership Youth Forum with the Slovenian presidency under the title ‘Youth participation in democratic processes’ and the first edition of the EU4Youth days were held. The EUR 6.4 million contribution agreement for phase II of the EaP European School in Georgia started its implementation in January 2021.

Building on the EU’s rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the EaP in 2020, the EU put in place in early 2021 a EUR 40 million three-year regional programme to support the preparedness and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines in the six EaP countries. This programme’s objective is to reduce COVID-19’s overall impact on health by supporting partner countries to increase vaccine uptake, including in rural areas. The programme facilitates the deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, for instance by delivering over 100 vaccine freezers, strengthening the capacity for mass vaccination and trained over 26 000 health workers. Furthermore, it helped improve mobility by supporting Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to join the EU Digital COVID-19 Certificate system. To complement this action, the EU has put in place a Team Europe initiative coordinated by Poland to set up an innovative arrangement supporting EU Member States in the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines.

In **Armenia**, the EU supported the implementation of reforms aiming to improve labour market efficiency and employability with particular emphasis on agricultural employment, and improving the quality of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The EU supported Armenian civil society organisations with 12 projects aiming to improve their resilience, sustainability and capacity for innovation, enabling them to play a pivotal role in deepening democracy and support vulnerable populations. The European Media Facility in Armenia kicked-off in 2021 to support independent media to become more professional, financially sustainable and to fulfil its democratic role by offering reliable information to the population. In **Azerbaijan** the Education Support programme was completed. This programme has helped to reform and modernise the education sector, including increasing access to lifelong learning and helping to establish community-based preschool centres for 10 000 children in 50 rural communities across ten regions of Azerbaijan.

In **Belarus**, in line with the Council Conclusions of 12 October 2020¹⁰⁴, the EU has redirected its support away from the Belarusian authorities and intensified cooperation with non-state stakeholders, including civil society, independent media and youth. The EU further supported activities aimed at providing possibilities to study abroad for Belarusian students, both through support to an advanced training and learning programme and by supporting the European Humanities University. In **Georgia**, implementation of the Skills Development and Matching for Labour Market Needs (Skills4Jobs) programme continued with the disbursement of the third tranche of EUR 3.8 million supporting job intermediations and training of Vocational Education and Training teachers. In **Moldova** the construction of the EU4Innovation centre in Cahul was started and support to STEM education was actively promoted.

¹⁰⁴ [Council Conclusions 11661/20 of 12 October 2020](#).

During 2021, EU expertise mobilised through the TAIEX instrument supported the authorities in **Azerbaijan** in maintaining the quality of teaching in primary, secondary and tertiary education in the virtual environment. The three separate TAIEX events focused on the challenges of the virtual assessment process in interactive teaching methods and facilitating student engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A twinning project between Moldova and a consortium from Finland, Estonia and Lithuania to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the Vocational Education and Training system completed successfully as planned in May 2021. The twinning providing valuable assistance to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and to VET institutions across the country to implement the national VET strategy 2013-2020.

Green Deal

The implementation of the European Green Deal is a priority and the EU, its Member States and the Eastern Partner countries expressed strong political commitment to work together towards the green transition as one of the key goals for the Eastern Partnership's (EaP) post-2020 agenda and its economic and investment plan (EIP). During the Third EaP Ministerial Meeting on Environment and Climate in June 2021 the discussion focussed on policy measures necessary for implementing this priority. The Joint Staff Working Document 'Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities'¹⁰⁵ identified environmental and climate resilience as a priority. This was confirmed by the Eastern Partnership Summit in December 2021. The Regional multiannual indicative programme (MIP) for the post-2020 period allocates 20 % of the overall budget for regional programmes to the priority on environmental and climate resilience. The importance of this priority is also echoed in the EIP with around half of the planned investments being green investments. Within the framework of regional cooperation, policy dialogue, institution building measures, blending, and pilot projects have continued with a focus on climate adaptation and mitigation, environmental protection and the green energy transition. EU4Environment has been assisting SMEs in the transition to the circular economy based on resource efficient and cleaner production. The EU Water Initiative Plus, completed in mid-2021, has brought water monitoring in the EaP region closer to EU standards. EU4Climate assisted Armenia, Belarus, Moldova and Azerbaijan in preparing their updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In Georgia and Ukraine, EU4Climate assisted with awareness-raising and communicating the revised NDC targets. All EaP countries increased their ambition in reducing GHG emissions by 2030, compared to the previous NDC cycle. EU4Energy has further strengthened legislative and regulatory frameworks as well as evidence-based policy design and promoted a conducive environment for sustainable energy investments.

The EU has also been working on integrating electricity grids between Ukraine and Moldova and the EU. In **Ukraine**, a EUR 53.4 million project (EU contribution EUR 9 million) will develop good governance in the Ukrainian energy sector, support the restructuring of the utility provider Ukrenergo, and rehabilitate nine sub-stations in Ukraine's South-Western Power Grid. In **Moldova**, a EUR 270.8 million project (EU contribution EUR 40.8 million) will finance an electricity substation and transmission line, as well as upgrading existing infrastructure, to strengthen the connection with Romania. This will contribute to the stability and efficiency of the Ukrainian and Moldovan electricity grids, contributing to diversification of supply and increased energy security. In 2021, the EU contributed an additional EUR 50 million to the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment

¹⁰⁵ [SWD\(2021\) 186 final of 2 July 2021](#).

Partnership (E5P) to encourage municipal investments in energy efficiency and environmental projects in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Support to environmental monitoring in the Black Sea (EMBLAS) continued through a new phase of the programme. This goes hand in hand with a newly adopted EUR 3.5 million programme on Strengthening Environmental Resilience and Maritime Safety for Black and Caspian Sea riparian states.

2021 also saw the signature of the EU4Environment Water and Data programme amounting to EUR 12.75 million. The programme is closely linked to the regional Team Europe initiative on Zero pollution. Following the success of the first two phases of the Global Covenant of Mayors initiative, a new EUR 5.3 million phase was launched at the end of 2021 to enable local authorities to develop and implement sustainable energy and climate actions. In line with the European Green Deal, the EU Green Agriculture initiative in **Armenia** was implemented, in cooperation with the Austrian Development Agency, and focused on organic agribusinesses, supporting sustainable agriculture, empowering small farmers, promoting gender inclusiveness and healthy lifestyle, tackling rural poverty, and fighting climate change among other objectives. In line with the EIP flagships for Armenia, the EU supported investment in smart mobility and sustainable urban transport through the procurement of 100 new buses for Yerevan. In 2021, the EU launched a new project to assist the Ministry of Energy of **Azerbaijan** with the enforcement of the Law on the Efficient Use of Energy Resources and Energy Efficiency, drafting secondary legislation, establishing and enforcing the regulatory framework for energy efficiency in new and existing buildings. In addition, it assisted with introducing energy certificate schemes for buildings and energy labelling for products related to energy consumption and requirements for eco-design.

In **Georgia** under the E5P programme renovation work to improve energy efficiency in 22 public buildings has been completed and is continuing in several more. In **Moldova** through the E5P programme, eleven new trolleybuses that operate on electricity and use batteries have been delivered to Balti, Moldova's second largest city. With the new vehicles, the city has expanded existing routes and has improved the overall efficiency of the service as well as reducing air pollution and GHG emissions. In Chisinau, the rehabilitation programme involving energy efficiency measures for 22 public buildings (and potentially residential buildings) is progressing. The investments focus mainly on improvements to the building envelope and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning systems but also envisage demand side management measures.

TAIEX contributed to the European Green Deal through a dedicated series of flagship events on the Green Deal and Green Recovery targeting all NEAR countries including those in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The event series informed the enlargement and neighbourhood partners about the EU policies and outlined what the Commission is doing to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. Other topics included the redesigning of economic and environmental policies in line with sustainable production and consumption principles as well as food safety, reduction of food losses and re-use of water for agricultural purposes. Through Twinning, Czech Republic and Finland supported the Ministry of Environment of Armenia to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry to comply with the commitments taken under the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and its roadmap on environmental conservation and biodiversity.

[Green Deal Success Story](#)

During 2016-2021, the European Union Water Initiative Plus programme has assisted the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – to adopt

and implement a systemic approach to water management. The EU Water Framework Directive and the Water Convention served as major references for carrying out regulatory reforms, enhance public participation, scale up river basin management planning and modernise monitoring. Transboundary cooperation was a central element of the programme. The EU made these groundbreaking achievements possible by providing a EUR 23.5 million grant. The Austrian Development Agency and the French Artois-Picardie Water Agency co-funded the programme with EUR 1 million. Follow-up work on improving water management in the EaP countries will continue in 2022. This will be instrumental for the EIP to deliver its promise of cleaner and more accessible water for people and nature. As a result of this programme, five agreements on transboundary water cooperation (Dniester, Kura, Khrami-Debeda, Neman and Western Dvina basins) were further developed. Hundreds of knowledge products and analytical equipment were delivered and nine water laboratories in partner countries modernised. To provide transparent data on the status and use of water resources, water information systems were modernised and 44 surveys were carried out in rivers, ground- and coastal waters, covering over 1 000 sites. Thanks to the programme, around 30 million people (40 % of the countries' population) are benefiting from 11 new or revised River Basin Management Plans and water monitoring that is closer to EU standards.

Sustainable Growth and Jobs

In 2021, the EU adopted an ambitious economic and investment plan (EIP) for the Eastern Neighbourhood, which has the potential of mobilising up to EUR 17 billion of public and private investments to support socio-economic recovery and pursue the green and digital transitions. Within this framework, the EU focused its financial and technical support on further improving SMEs' access to finance and on providing advisory services to help them adapt to the new reality of running a business in a context of sanitary restrictions and accelerate their digital transformation. The EU's overall objective remained that of helping its Eastern partners move towards even more diversified and integrated economies, attracting investments and creating jobs.

The EU's support contributed to improving the investment and business environment and unlock SMEs growth potential. Over 1 222 business organisations received EU assistance through the EU4Business initiative. EU financial assistance has remained instrumental in addressing gaps in access to finance and had benefited over 71 000 SMEs (around 63.9 % in DCFTA countries) in 2020 (latest figures available). More than 945 000 jobs have been created or sustained. Out of EUR 1.6 billion in loans mobilised from EU support since the end of 2016, around 32 % (EUR 520 million) have been in local currency. The Structural Reform Facility supported the development of action plans to develop non-banking alternatives for SME financing and credit registries in all six partner countries. To improve resilience of local communities and foster the creation of jobs, 13 new pilot projects for sustainable local economic development have been launched in selected municipalities under the programme 'Mayors for Economic Growth'. Twenty other municipalities were selected to receive targeted mentoring and funding opportunities to develop portfolios of investments addressing local economic development challenges. The EU continued to provide aid for trade to its Eastern partners, notably through the activities of the EaP Trade Helpdesk that aims at easing access to tariff information and trade statistics and by providing targeted support to SMEs in export-oriented sectors in the context of the ready2trade project. The EU also supported business support organisations (such as chambers of commerce) to facilitate business relations between EU importers and investors and EaP producers. As a result, the number of companies from DCFTA countries exporting to the EU

has increased significantly between 2014 and 2021: by 65 % in Georgia, by 70 % in Moldova and by 42 % in Ukraine.

During 2021, the EU continued its support for shared and inclusive economic growth in **Armenia** through SMEs development under the framework of the EU4Business initiative and in line with the EIP flagships for the country. Support was provided to SMEs in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, technology development and social entrepreneurship with projects covering access to skills and knowledge, access to finance and markets targeting start-ups and new businesses, with particular focus on the three northern pilot provinces of Shirak, Lori and Tavush. The EU-Armenia SME Fund continued its fundraising activities in 2021 and by the end of the year increased its fund size to USD 50 million. The EU-EBRD Support to the State Commission for the Protection of Economic Competition in Armenia was launched in February aiming to enforce competition policy in the country and provide capacity building to the State Commission.

Supporting sustainable economic diversification of **Azerbaijan** remained an underlying objective of the EU's assistance in this sector. In 2021, the Support to Rural and Regional Development programme was successfully completed. During its implementation, the programme covered 28 regions and supported market-driven income and employment-generating activities in rural areas of Azerbaijan as well as helped to build the capacity of national and local authorities in socio-economic development. In addition, the EU launched the EU4Lankaran project (EUR 5 million) to enhance the competitiveness and value-added of the fruit and vegetable sector of the Lankaran economic region, while addressing the negative economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU also launched a new project with the World Bank of over EUR 5 million to provide a series of technical assistance, analytical service and other type of advisory activities aligned with the priority areas set out in the EU-Azerbaijan Partnership Priorities.

Following the October 2020 EU Council Conclusions, the EU programmes supporting private sector and real economy in **Belarus** have been re-focused on SMEs support. The EBRD implemented 'Advice for Small Business in Belarus', providing direct support to SMEs, has been extended until the end of 2022. A follow up phase engaging EUR 4 million was signed in December 2021. Supporting SMEs to reap the full benefits of the DCFTA in **Georgia** has been a top priority for EU cooperation. Through the OECD implemented project 'From Policies to Actions', the EU has supported the development and implementation of the new SME Development strategy 2021-2025. The strategy is in line with EU priorities and includes important aspects such as women entrepreneurship, digitalisation and green growth. In 2021, 229 Leader local development projects were concluded in **Moldova** following EU funding under the 'Development of rural areas – Leader approach for rural prosperity' project. 53 % of the projects were implemented by women, benefitting 165 rural communities and 270 jobs were created, of which 72 are expected to be permanent.

TAIEX contributed to an economy that works for people through a dedicated workshop on ensuring vulnerable groups' access to social services during the pandemic in cooperation with Azerbaijan. EU Member State experts shared their experiences on the provision of home-based social services to vulnerable groups with the aim of mitigating and preventing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a Twinning project in Georgia led by the Slovak Republic together with Estonia and Spain supported the drafting of a new legal framework to improve employment conditions as well as health and safety at work.

Digitalisation, Science, Technology and Innovation

In line with the July 2021 Joint Staff Working Document 'Recovery, resilience, and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities'¹⁰⁶, the EU has committed to further investment to support the resilient digital transformation of its Eastern neighbours. At the Eastern Partnership Summit of 15 December 2021, the EU, its Member States and the Eastern Partner countries confirmed this ambition. The renewed Eastern Partnership agenda includes a set of digital flagship initiatives and is underpinned by an EIP, which aims to mobilise potential public and private investments of up to EUR 1.5 billion to support the development of resilient digital economies and societies.

In 2021, the Commission actively contributed to the post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities in the field of digital transformation by supporting key milestones in the areas of digital infrastructure, e-governance, digital economy and innovation and cyber-resilience. Under the umbrella programme EU4Digital, the EU facilitated ongoing work for the preparation of a Regional Roaming Agreement and Regional Spectrum Agreement, which will contribute to reduce roaming prices in the region by almost 90 % in the next five years and facilitate the deployment of 5G technology upon signature. Procurement activities carried out under the EaPConnect programme, have led to the prices for high-speed international connectivity for research and education institutions dropping by 70 % in the region. The programme also supported the launch of two 'digital highways' bringing together research and education communities in Moldova and Ukraine with the EU, through ultra-fast connectivity (up to 100 Gigabits per second).

To extend the benefits of the EU Digital Single Market to the Eastern Partnership region, the EU4Digital Facility completed six pilot projects in the fields of e-signature, e-commerce, and e-customs, and produced guidelines in the areas of innovation, digital skills and e-health. The EU4Digital Facility also developed an Eastern Partnership start-up ecosystem platform, gathering more than 2 500 digital start-ups and connecting them to European and international investors. Common cyber-security guidelines were developed for the entire EaP region through the Cyber-East programme which supported capacity-building activities to strengthen national cybersecurity governance and legal frameworks in line with the Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive).

In **Armenia**, a new digitalisation strategy was adopted in February 2021, however following the elections in June 2021 a revision process was launched for the existing digitalisation strategy. Within the framework of EU assistance to support e-justice in Armenia, a new project on Development and Introduction of E-Justice Solutions in Armenia, started in November 2021. **Azerbaijan** continued benefiting through activities under the regional EU4Digital programme which included promoting and developing digital skills, competence frameworks and skills assessments across different sectors.

In **Belarus**, support to the digital thematic area is provided under EU4Digital and EaP Connect II. Belarus can still participate in these programmes as long as this benefits the people and does not imply engagement with the Belarusian authorities, as per the October 2020 Council Conclusions¹⁰⁷. In line with the EIP, new initiatives have been launched to step up the digital transformation in **Georgia**. The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Georgia signed a loan of EUR 34 million in late 2021 to support middle-mile connectivity by deploying fibre data cables in 1 000 settlements across the

¹⁰⁶ [SWD\(2021\) 186 final of 2 July 2021](#).

¹⁰⁷ [Council Conclusions 11661/20 of 12 October 2020](#).

regions. This is directly linked to the implementation of EIP Flagship project four. In **Moldova**, the EU4Digital Initiative supports the digital reform agenda with a range of actions to promote key areas of the digital economy and society. Several pilot projects were implemented among them is the eDelivery pilot on electronic invoice exchange using the trusted and secure eDelivery channel. The eCustoms pilot will allow automatic exchange of non-confidential information between the Customs authorities of Moldova and Romania relating to empty trucks at one border-crossing point. In October 2021, Moldova became associated to Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation programme (2021-2027). Moldovan researchers and innovators can now participate in the EUR 95.5 billion programme under the same conditions as entities from Member States.

TAIEX contributed to the general objective of a Europe fit for the digital age through a dedicated flagship event series on Digital policy targeting all NEAR countries including those in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The events informed our partner countries about the EU Digital policy. In addition, a dedicated regional Workshop was organised with the Eastern Partnership countries focused on critical cyber infrastructure and the 5G toolbox. Finally, a dedicated Twinning project implemented by Lithuania and Latvia was concluded to improve the market access and interconnections of electronic communications networks and associated facilities in Ukraine.

In 2021, EU4DigitalUA continued to implement capacity building, communication and data protection and interoperability, e-services and cybersecurity projects that had started in 2020. The programme is aimed at improving the efficiency and security of public service delivery and their access to citizens and businesses that would result in more and better public electronic services provided by Government authorities. EU4DigitalUA helps **Ukraine** with building the resilience of the Ukrainian governmental data infrastructure, backup data centres and the migration of important state data into cloud solutions, further developing electronic services needed for the population and businesses. Starting from October 2021, the EU-funded Digital policy support to Ukraine technical project provides support to the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine and the National Regulatory Commission for Electronic Communications, Radio Spectrum and Postal Services of Ukraine (the national regulator) in updating and implementing the commitments in the area of the digital economy under Appendix XVII-3 of the EU – Ukraine Association Agreement /DCFTA. Public authorities with a key role in Ukraine’s digital economy are being supported in strengthening their institutional capacity to formulate, adopt and implement digital economy policy. The regulator is being supported in its further strengthening of its independence, as well in the analysis of markets and protection of consumer rights under the electronic communications framework.

Migration

In line with Council Conclusions of October 2020¹⁰⁸, in Belarus most activities in the area of migration were suspended or partially suspended. Since summer 2021, and in response to the EU’s united support for the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus, the Lukashenka regime has engaged in the state-sponsored instrumentalisation of migration, in a hybrid attack on the EU. In response, the EU and its agencies have mobilised in support of the affected Member States, and provided assistance to stranded migrants, including in cooperation with organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. After a peak period in November, the migration situation

¹⁰⁸ [Council Conclusions 11661/20 of 12 October 2020](#).

stabilised. This is thanks in part to diplomatic outreach by the Commission and EEAS to halt migration flows at source, thus limiting the numbers arriving in Belarus. In parallel, the Council has expanded the EU's Belarus sanctions regime to target those responsible for or linked to the instrumentalisation of migration.

Governance, Peace and Security

Promoting reforms in good governance and security, in line with EU values, strengthening the rule of law and fighting corruption and organised crime are part of the governance pillar of the post-2020 Eastern Partnership agenda. Addressing these issues is a necessary precondition for boosting economic and social development in the region. It contributes to improving the business environment and boosting investors' confidence. This was endorsed by the EU, its Member States and partner countries at the December 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit. This comprehensive agenda based on the respect for democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and equality also plays an important role in building resilience in partner countries and is supported through all of the EU's tools.

Good governance, rule of law, fundamental values and fighting corruption remain the cornerstone of EU-**Armenia** relations. Following the elections in June, the Government remains committed to an ambitious justice and anti-corruption agenda, despite implementation delays due to COVID-19 and hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Following the adoption of the Law on the Anti-corruption Committee in spring 2021, the Committee was established and the Chairperson selected in September. The EU continues to be the largest donor of financial assistance to the justice sector in Armenia, playing an important role in donor coordination and policy dialogues. The EU's ongoing budget support to the justice sector focused in 2021 on strengthening the institutional capacity of the justice and anti-corruption sector in particular the newly established/reformed bodies as well as enhancing the quality of justice in line with the requirements under CEPA and EU best practice. Anti-corruption efforts are also supported by the EU-Council of Europe regional initiative Partnership for Good Governance to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. The EU's technical and financial support helped Armenia on the police reform process with a new Police Reforms strategy and action plan being developed. In July 2021, the new patrol service was introduced and launched in Yerevan with around 700 patrol officers trained through EU technical support and in December an additional 590 officers took the training in the Lori and Shirak provinces. The EU funded project Accountable Institutions and Human Rights in Armenia started in May 2021 and supports strategic reforms on accountable and effective service delivery in the field of security/police, human rights promotion and constitutional reform. An additional assistance package of EUR 10 million had been allocated and committed to support the conflict-affected populations in Armenia and Azerbaijan following the escalation of hostilities at the end of 2020.

In **Azerbaijan**, the EU, through several ongoing projects, continued providing assistance to increasing the efficiency of the judiciary, development of alternative dispute resolution, conducting penitentiary reform and capacity building of administrative and commercial courts as well as reinforcing overall access to justice. Since 2018, with the help of the EU, more than 6 700 vulnerable persons received free legal aid across the country. In 2021, the EU implemented two projects on public financial management with a focus on improving management of public expenditures and revenue as well as building institutional capacity in resolving tax disputes for a credible, independent and timely

resolution of taxpayer objections, thereby strengthening public confidence in the tax system and reducing opportunities for corruption and abuse.

In **Georgia** the Security, Accountability and Fight Against Crime (SAFE) programme continues supporting civilian oversight of the security sector and improved border management. The EU is also contributing to the advancement of good government in areas such as anticorruption and public finance management. The EU monitoring mission (EUMM) remains on the ground along the administrative boundary lines with the break-away territories. In **Moldova** further support was provided for strengthening rule of law, justice and security by supporting the justice reform process, ensuring that the basic rights such as access to justice and the right for an effective remedy are better respected and the legal profession is strengthened. Despite the challenges faced, the EU border assistance mission (EUBAM) continued delivering results and contributes to security across borders. EUBAM supported confidence-building measures related to the Transnistrian region, promoted integrated border management, and contributed to the fight against organised crime and trafficking. During two cross border operations 8.5 million cigarettes and 235 kg of heroin were seized.

4.4.1.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

The last monitoring of the Eastern Partnership ‘20 Deliverables for 2020’ framework highlighted the engagement of partners to strengthen preparedness and response capabilities by taking part in exercises and expert exchanges, as well as developing specific guidelines and tools in cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

Under the new Eastern Partnership agenda, it is foreseen to continue cooperation with Eastern partners on civil protection matters, and specifically to enhance their capacity to prevent, prepare, and respond to natural and man-made disasters, and further enhance cooperation among the partner countries and with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

After more than seven years of conflict, the security situation in eastern Ukraine remains volatile. Since the July 2020 ceasefire, there have been fewer hostilities and civilian casualties. However, in 2021, daily incidents continued to cause damage to housing, water and electricity supply, schools, and health facilities, leaving some 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. One-third of all people in need are older persons, making this conflict the ‘oldest’ humanitarian crisis in the world. By the end of 2021, the build-up of over 100 000 Russian troops at the border with Ukraine led to an escalation of tensions and increasing fears over humanitarian consequences in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Since the beginning of this new crisis, the EU has been preparing for every scenario, working together with donors and partners on contingency and preparedness.



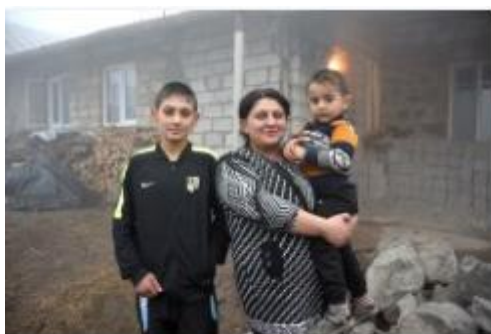
Case study – Health assistance in Ukraine

Nina suffers from high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. She lives in Zolote 3, a town close to the ‘line of contact’, which divides eastern Ukraine into areas under the Government’s control and those outside it. There is no local doctor, and like Nina, many older residents

struggle to access healthcare due to their reduced mobility. Thanks to the ACCESS Consortium¹⁰⁹, funded by the EU, mobile medical teams regularly visit their town.

The EU is one of the largest humanitarian donors to the crisis in eastern Ukraine, with an allocation of EUR 28.9 million in 2021. The EU humanitarian funding, delivered through UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, helped people access healthcare, including better preparation and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding also supports the rehabilitation of damaged houses, schools, and hospitals. It provides affected people with the means to meet their basic needs and access safe water, education in emergencies, and protection services including legal support. In 2021, EU funded humanitarian assistance reached more than 750 000 people in Ukraine's government-controlled areas and in the non-government-controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk.

In 2020, the six-week long conflict over Nagorno Karabakh between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** caused casualties, damage and displacement of the local population. The fighting forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes for security and safety reasons. In 2021, The EU continued responding to the impact of the conflict with EUR 13 million in humanitarian support to address the needs of the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict in both countries. The emergency support helped EU humanitarian partners deliver basic assistance including food, hygiene and household items, multi-purpose cash assistance, shelter, education in emergencies, health and psychosocial support, medical equipment, and other urgent assistance to older persons, women and children. The funding also included early recovery aid by providing livelihoods support helping conflict-affected people rebuild their lives, as well as humanitarian demining in populated areas, and mine risk education.



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Matanat's husband was one of the civilian victims of the 2020 Karabakh conflict. Matanat, a mother of three, received blankets, hygiene kits and winter gloves from the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#), funded by the EU, at the onset of winter in Azerbaijan.

Case studies – Armenia and Azerbaijan

'We mainly think about how to put food on the table,' says Arpine, a mother of three. After leaving Nagorno-Karabakh during the 2020 conflict, the family still struggles to make ends meet in Armenia. Thanks to the EU-funded organisation [People in Need](#), eco-friendly briquettes helped them stay warm during the winter.

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.acted.org/en/access-consortium-to-support-more-than-85000-people-affected-by-conflict-in-eastern-ukraine/>

As for Belarus, the EU has promptly allocated EUR 700 000 in humanitarian funding to address the humanitarian impact of the migration crisis, which escalated in November 2021, leaving many vulnerable refugees and migrants, including families and children, in dire conditions without basic necessities and protection. The funding allowed humanitarian partners to deliver much needed relief assistance, including food, hygiene kits, blankets, and first aid kits, to people stranded at the EU external border with Belarus, as well as basic assistance for those accommodated in the temporary reception centre in Grodno, especially during the cold late autumn and winter period of 2021. The EU continued to advocate for dignified shelter solutions as well as proper humanitarian access to those in need.

4.4.1.5. Crisis response and preparedness

EU crisis response actions continued to support efforts by civil society actors to build peace, promote credible reforms and increase accountability for the systematic violation of human rights.

The EU continued its support to finding peaceful solutions to conflicts in the **South Caucasus**, including the conflict between **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan**. Confidence building measures were implemented to support EU facilitated negotiations between the parties.

Following the falsification of the August 2020 presidential election in **Belarus**, the EU has continued to focus its assistance on civil society and away from the central authorities. The Commission service for Foreign Policy Instruments provided short-term bridging assistance to help media and civil society ahead of more substantial complementary support to local democracy activists and organisations from other parts of the Commission.

The EU monitoring mission in **Georgia** (EUMM Georgia) is a civilian Mission, funded under the Common Foreign and Security Policy budget. It provides civilian monitoring of the Parties' actions, to contribute to stabilisation, normalisation and confidence building, whilst also contributing to informing European policy in support of a durable political solution for Georgia.

Following the energy supply crisis in **Moldova** in late 2021, an emergency budget support measure was granted, to mitigate the effect of energy price rises on the most vulnerable consumers, and to help build the energy reform capacity of the Government of Moldova.

In **Ukraine**, EU support to the important work of the OSCE special monitoring mission continued through crisis response actions. Support to dialogue and peace efforts, as well as mine action in conflict affected parts of the country, also continued during the year. Assistance to Ukraine's efforts in tackling disinformation continued and was further enhanced through support to the establishment of a dedicated government-run Centre for Strategic Communication and Information Security.

Through financing via the CFSP budget, the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in **Ukraine** (EUAM Ukraine) continues to assist Ukraine in the field of civilian security sector reform, including police and the rule of law. In support of Ukraine's commitments to security sector reform, EUAM is mentoring and advising relevant Ukrainian bodies on the development of renewed security strategies and in the consequent implementation of relevant comprehensive and cohesive reform efforts.

4.4.2. European Neighbourhood South

4.4.2.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The year 2021 was marked by the adoption in February of a Joint Communication proposing an ambitious and innovative **new Agenda for the Mediterranean**¹¹⁰ and related Council Conclusions in April¹¹¹.

Many political, socio-economic and security challenges in the Southern Neighbourhood remain to be addressed, while some have been further exacerbated in 2021 by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unresolved conflicts continued to weigh heavily on the economies and societies of the region. The new Agenda will help seize opportunities together with our Southern Neighbourhood partners, making the most out of the green and digital transition, and creating inclusive societies and economies for all, especially for women and youth.

The new Agenda focuses on five priority areas: Human development, good governance and the rule of law; Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition; Peace and security; Migration and mobility; and Green transition, climate resilience, energy, and environment.

A dedicated economic and investment plan (EIP) for the Southern Neighbours adopted with the Joint Communication aims to ensure that the quality of life for people in the region improves and the economic recovery, including following the COVID-19 pandemic, leaves no one behind. The plan includes preliminary flagship initiatives. Under the EU's new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe), up to EUR 7 billion for the period 2021-2027 will be allocated to its implementation, to potentially mobilise up to EUR 30 billion in private and public investment in the region over the next decade.

EU and Southern Neighbourhood partners confirmed their commitment to the new Agenda with a specific focus on Green Transition at the ministerial conference which took place in Barcelona on 29 November, organised back-to-back with the 6th Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Regional Forum.

The work for the preparation of bilateral political frameworks (Partnership Priorities), identifying jointly agreed priorities to guide the relations between the EU and the Southern Neighbourhood partners, continued in 2021. The preparation of the Partnership Priorities considers the priorities of the New Agenda. While the old priorities were extended at the end of 2020 until new documents are agreed and adopted, the preparation of multiannual programming documents under the new financial instrument architecture of NDICI-Global Europe also progressed in 2021.

Tunisia has been going through a delicate political and socio-economic situation in 2021 aggravated by the pandemic. Given such a dire context, a first instalment of EUR 300 million in the context of the MFA operation was disbursed in June 2021 to address the consequences of the pandemic. Work in sectoral technical sub-committees continued in the framework of the Association Agreement in the first half of the year, while contacts at various levels were maintained following the announcement by the Tunisian President on 25 July to dismiss the Prime Minister and suspend parliamentary activity.

The EU-**Morocco** dialogue and cooperation continued with the organisation of several sectoral sub-committee meetings and regular exchanges of information. Discussions on the two main EU-Morocco

¹¹⁰ [JOIN\(2021\) 2 final of 9 February 2021](#).

¹¹¹ [Council Conclusions 7931/21 of 19 April 2021](#).

partnerships - green deal and digital- progressed well, with the first almost finalised. However, there has been no advance in adopting long-term Partnership Priorities.

EU relations with **Egypt** continued to expand in 2021 through various political and policy engagements. President of the European Council Michel and President el-Sisi were in regular communication. The High Representative Vice-President (HRVP) handed to the Egyptian Foreign Minister in July 2021 the EU's proposal for the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities (2021-2027), followed by subsequent negotiations. At the 7th EU-Egypt Association Committee in October both sides took stock of the latest subcommittee cycle and exchanged views on shared interests and challenges. A first High-Level Political Dialogue took place in October and the 3rd Senior Officials Migration Dialogue in November, both in Cairo.

EU-**Algeria** Association Council in December 2020 confirmed the renewed commitment to deepening the partnership to achieve its full potential. Institutional meetings between EU and Algeria continued with several sectoral EU-Algeria sub-committee meetings taking place throughout the year. The EU is negotiating the revised partnerships priorities. Energy, strengthening stability in the region, governance and human rights, economic cooperation and trade, the environment, and migration remain mutual interests. However, despite a tentatively mutually agreed solution, the trade barriers raised by Algeria subject to the formal dispute settlement procedure launched in June 2020 (by way of reference to the Association Council, on the basis of the EU-Algeria Association Agreement) remain an outstanding issue.

The EU continued engaging with **Jordan** to pursue a constructive policy dialogue, including at the May 2021 EU-Jordan Association Committee and the Sub-committee on Justice and Security, and assistance programmes in a broad range of areas. In May 2021 in Brussels, the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission discussed with King Abdullah II ways to bolster the EU-Jordan partnership as well as efforts to counter the COVID-19 pandemic. In July 2021, the second instalment of the EU MFA III programme in Jordan was disbursed (EUR 250 million) to assist the country in meeting urgent external financing needs caused by the pandemic.

In **Lebanon**, the EU reinforced its calls for the urgent formation of a credible and accountable Government and the implementation of necessary reforms. On 30 July, the Council adopted a framework for targeted restrictive measures to address the situation in Lebanon, including the possibility of imposing sanctions against persons and entities who are responsible for undermining democracy or the rule of law. On 4 August, HRVP Josep Borrell with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, took part in the international Conference in support of the Lebanese people to reconfirm the EU's full solidarity and support. In September, the EU welcomed the formation of the new Lebanese Government and reiterated the EU's readiness to accompany Lebanon towards the credible implementation of urgent and essential reforms.

The EU remained committed to the resolution of the **Israeli-Palestinian** conflict based on the two-state solution and throughout the year reiterated its clear position that all settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory are against international law and unilateral measures should be avoided. The EU has welcomed the normalisation agreements between Israel and some Arab countries, notably the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco. EU commitment to the Middle East Peace Process with the parties was demonstrated by continuing engagement with them. The EU has also continued supporting, politically and financially, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in close cooperation with the international donor community.

The EU continued to provide assistance across **Syria** and in neighbouring refugee-hosting countries. The EU supported the efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict negotiated under the auspices of the UN according to Security Council Resolution 2254, notably through the Constitutional Committee in Geneva and supporting the work of the UN Special Envoy for Syria. The EU continued to be a partner to the Global Coalition to defeat Da'esh and maintained substantial restrictive measures on the Assad regime. The 5th Brussels Conference in March 2021 generated pledges worth EUR 5.3 billion for 2021 and beyond for Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting the largest Syrian refugee population.

In **Libya**, the EU continued to support efforts to stabilise the country. The creation of the Government of National Unity in March provided opportunities for engagement reiterated during a HRVP visit in September. The EU continued its active involvement in the UN-led Berlin Process and in the Berlin and Paris conferences in June and November respectively. Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI guaranteed the implementation of the UN arms embargo. The EU Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Libya continued to build Libyan authorities' capacities in the areas of border management, law enforcement and criminal justice. The EU Liaison and Planning Cell (EULPC) provided key security, intelligence and planning expertise to the EU and to the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The EU backed the UN and Libyan efforts to organise elections through the deployment of an Election Expert Mission.

4.4.2.2. Working together towards the SDGs

During 2021, the EU continued to adjust its assistance and programming to support national and local authorities and populations, including the most vulnerable groups, to respond to the effects of the ongoing pandemic situation in the Southern Neighbourhood. Based on needs expressed by partner countries, this support focused specifically on health, economic and social sectors.

Contributing to SDG 3, the EU continued to develop programmes to promote well-being and good health in a region hard-hit by the pandemic, providing either additional funding, redesigning existing programmes or by providing technical assistance, either in human form (by funding or training health experts) or in material form (providing additional medical equipment or supplies). In various Team Europe actions, the EU pooled efforts with Member States to provide significant emergency support, such as vaccines (via direct donations, or via the COVAX Facility), medical supplies and equipment to support the fight against COVID-19.

Working on SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), support to eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls was pursued through specific assistance to women's civil society organisations (CSOs) and through the specialised technical expertise of the Council of Europe (CoE). In the partner countries, the EU continued to work with national and local authorities on women's empowerment and gender equality by promoting the participation of women in politics, women entrepreneurship and economic autonomy, and support to keep girls of impoverished families in school, thus also contributing to SDG 4. In Syria, the EU funded a programme to enhance women's participation in peace-building processes, working towards SDG 16.

In terms of SDG 4 (Quality education), through the Erasmus+ programme the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the Western Balkans. During the period 2014-2020 there were more than 56 000 short-term mobilities planned with the region, 654 Erasmus Mundus scholarships to students, 206 capacity-building in higher education projects coordinated by

higher education institutions in the region and 15 Jean Monnet projects with higher education institutions in the region were selected.

In 2021 there were limited calls open for the regions outside the EU. 11 students from the region were selected for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master scholarships. In Jean Monnet Actions, 1 project with applicants from the region (Algeria) was selected and 15 Capacity building in youth projects were selected. Organisations from South-Mediterranean are involved in three Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges projects selected from call 2021.

Within the larger goal of taking urgent action in one of the regions most affected by the effects of climate change (SDG 13), water scarce and exposed to extreme heat, the EU, its Member States and International Financial Institutions have joined efforts to work together with the Southern Neighbourhood countries to protect the ecosystem they share around the Mediterranean Sea. As illustrations, a Team Europe initiative on water has been developed in Tunisia (SDG 6); in Morocco, where a Green Partnership is under development, a programme promotes eco-agriculture and sustainable management of forests, among other objectives (SDG 15); and in Egypt, the support to institutional reform and capacity building in the irrigation sector, fundamental for food security of a large population, continues (SDG 2). The EU is also financing an innovative project to transform wastewater into energy in Jordan, thus also contributing to SDG 7.

Europe's response to the pandemic in the Southern Neighbourhood also focused on post-pandemic recovery plans. In Algeria, two new programmes - one on blue economy (SDG 14) and one on youth entrepreneurship in the tourism sector - were developed. They both start field activities in the first months of 2022 and will contribute to the shared EU-Algeria agenda on sustainable growth and jobs (SDG 8).

In the wider pursuit of SDG 7 the EU is working with its southern partners to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources (including clean hydrogen), to enhance interregional interconnections through electricity infrastructure, as well as through supporting convergence of the regulatory frameworks, institutional capacity building, exchange of expertise and awareness raising.

Fighting the major challenges of growing urbanisation (SDG 11) in the whole region, and particularly in Egypt, which is home to one of the largest cities in the world and where the population is concentrated in a small part of the territory, the EU continued to support circular economy models (SDG 12) through activities on waste management, resource efficiency, pollution reduction in industries, and ecotourism.

In a region also undergoing deep political changes with some countries in turmoil since 2011, the EU and its Member States continued their efforts to promote inclusive societies, better governance, public accountability and a justice system that works for all (SDG 16). Work continued in the reform of the security sector in Tunisia focusing, for example, on the fight against money laundering, and work in digitalisation of the justice system to allow for swifter, fairer delivery of justice, while improved transparency in public finances, with EU support, allows for better supervision of the delivery of public services. As the principal supporter of the Palestinian authority, the EU has been in the lead in the area of public finance management and public administration reform for years.

All four components of the 2021 South regional migration programme are designed to support sustainable protection, return and reintegration in North Africa and to increase the protection and resilience of migrants, forcibly displaced persons and host communities, notably in Libya, with all

contributing to SDG 10 (reducing inequalities), in particular to sub-goal 'Responsible and well-managed migration policies'. These actions will also significantly contribute to SDGs 16, 3 and 5.

CASE STUDIES

Bringing together innovators, with a focus on women entrepreneurs (SDG 5 & SDG 9)

Project: THE NEXT SOCIETY, implemented by Anima - Budget: EUR 7.7 million

THE NEXT SOCIETY is an open community of change makers engaged in innovation and economic development. It brings together entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, NGOs, as well as public and private innovation and research hubs from Europe and Southern Mediterranean countries. This large network includes over 300 business and innovation, research and investment organisations, and 2 500 international SMEs and entrepreneurs from 30 countries.

Objectives

The purpose of this regional project is to improve the policy frameworks for innovation and start-ups, foster start-up success, promote and internationalise industrial clusters, and accelerate technology transfer into enterprises.

Impact

THE NEXT SOCIETY is at the origin of new regulatory frameworks that strongly accelerate innovation in several South Mediterranean countries on issues such as reform of the intellectual property regime in universities, crowdfunding, and adoption of tax measures that favour research in companies. The project has achieved substantial results for innovation support organisations and entrepreneurs with 78 technological partnerships and business contracts having been signed, 22 of the supported start-ups have raised more than EUR 2 million, 142 jobs have already been created, and 50 technologies have left South Mediterranean laboratories to be developed within the framework of industrial partnerships. Focus is also on women entrepreneurs. Half of the companies supported in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia have been founded or co-founded by women. Although girls have more opportunities to access higher education than ever before, UNESCO warns that globally only 35 % of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students are women. Even Southern Neighbourhood women, with a higher rate of 57 % of students in the field, struggle to make a living out of the laboratories. In this context, the EU co-funded project THE NEXT SOCIETY is removing the barriers to innovation in the Southern Neighbourhood region and is supporting women like Désirée el-Hajj in Lebanon and Yamina Bouchikh in Algeria to bring their innovative ideas to the market¹¹².

SDG 8 (Sustainable and inclusive economic growth) and SDG 12 (Sustainable consumption and production patterns)

Project: MED-UP on Social Entrepreneurship, implemented by OXFAM Budget: EUR 4.9 million

Objectives

¹¹² <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/women-and-science-eu-southern-neighbourhood-region-lessons-learnt-next-society-initiative>

The regional project promotes social entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region by: providing support to the national authorities on the regulatory framework, building the capacity of social economy organisations, and providing direct support to innovative social entrepreneurs.

Impact

MED-UP has triggered multiple positive actions for the adoption of new regulations and the development of strategies and policies on social economy.

In Lebanon, MED-UP contributed to the drafting of a law for social economy, which aims at creating an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship.

In Tunisia, a law on social economy was adopted last year. MED-UP is supporting the smooth implementation of the law and ensuring a regional peer review. A *Commission sectorielle de l'Economie sociale et solidaire pour l'agriculture et la pêche* was established thanks to the connections created during the peer review in Tunisia. The Palestinian Cooperative Work Agency networked with its counterpart agency in Morocco and with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture on the topic of regulating the social economy sector.

Moreover, the project achieved substantive results for support to organisations and social enterprises.

Social Economy Support Organisations (SESOs) received targeted support through MED-UP, in particular on the Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool - an instrument developed to help key actors in the field.

MED-UP has organised social innovation bootcamps and supported BuildPalestine, a not-for-profit organisation that connects supporters around the world with social impact projects in Palestine.

In Lebanon, the initiative 'Live, Love and Recycle' received EUR 10 000 through MED-UP. This is a free app that people can use when they have items to recycle, such as plastic, cans, metal and clothes.

So far, 64 social entrepreneurs have benefited from seed money (sub-granting) through the project.

4.4.2.3. Implementation

In February 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative adopted a new Agenda for the Mediterranean¹¹³. Through this new agenda, the EU will articulate its cooperation around five policy areas: human development, good governance and the rule of law; strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition; peace and security; migration and mobility; and Green transition, climate change resilience, energy and environment.

This Agenda is accompanied by an economic and investment plan, composed of flagship initiatives that aim at strengthening resilience, building prosperity and increasing trade and investment in our partner countries with a view to support competitiveness and inclusive growth. Along with socio-economic development (covering job creation, education, skills, women and youth empowerment, and improvements in public administration reform, including the rule of law) the green transition

¹¹³ [JOIN\(2021\) 2 final of 9 February 2021](#).

constitutes an essential element of this framework. Addressing migration challenges together also remains a top priority.

Some of the EIP's flagships are starting to take shape. We are working with Member States to develop Team Europe initiatives at country and regional level covering priority sectors such as resource management (including water) and economic development (including a regional TEI on job creation, trade and investment). Larger infrastructure projects are also concerned such as in Jordan on waste and sanitation programmes and desalination.

The EU's plans for interventions in the Region are developed hand in hand with the partner countries and are framed by jointly agreed political documents fixing common strategic priorities, called Partnership Priorities (PPs). In 2021, the preparation and negotiation of the PPs have progressed.

In the Southern Neighbourhood, the EU continued to adjust its assistance and programming to support local authorities and populations amongst the most vulnerable groups to respond to the effects of the ongoing pandemic situation during 2021. Based on needs expressed by partner countries, this support focused specifically on health, economic and social sectors. In various Team Europe actions, the EU pooled efforts with its Member States to provide emergency support, such as vaccines (via direct donations, or via the COVAX Facility), medical supplies and equipment to support the fight against COVID-19.

The EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian crisis (EUTF Syria) and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF Africa) – North Africa window continued to play a vital role providing urgent support to assist refugees, migrants and vulnerable host communities in neighbouring countries.

Health

By continuing to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and working towards the implementation of SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), the 2021 actions of the EU in the Southern Neighbourhood had a strong focus on health. The regional EU initiative on Health Security in the Southern Neighbourhood implemented by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control proved timely during the pandemic. It aims to increase preparedness, prevention and response in health crises and started to train a new cohort of epidemiologists.

At country level, the EU helped authorities establish or improve social security systems, through extending health coverage or the governance of social protection schemes. In Morocco, the new programme Karama was adopted in 2021 (EUR 130 million). It aims to enhance social protection. In Libya and Egypt, the EU provided substantial support to the health sector to address the sanitary and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In Tunisia, the EU health support programme Essaha Aziza was beefed up in 2021 to reach EUR 70 million. It provided high-level medical expertise (including an epidemiologist) and delivered a significant amount of biomedical equipment and vehicles (such as ambulances and refrigerated transport), enabling faster provision and high-quality care throughout the country, including the more isolated areas. The EU and Algeria worked on the roll-out of the COVID-19 response package (EUR 75 million), focusing on health emergencies, delivering several hundred thousand tests and millions of pieces of personal protection equipment. At the height of the third wave, in August 2021, the EU helped the emergency provision of 750 oxygen concentrators. The EU also strengthened its assistance to the Lebanese health sector with an additional EUR 64 million

of support to facilitate access to primary healthcare services and to procure essential medicines and vaccines for routine and COVID-19 immunisation.

Gender equality

Working on SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), support to eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls was pursued through specific support to women's civil society organisations (CSOs) and through the specialised technical expertise of the Council of Europe (CoE). The regional campaign to Combat Violence against Women in the Southern Mediterranean Region, and the EU-CoE programme South IV have been instrumental in documenting, advocating, and supporting victims of violence, as well as building capacities in the region on the provisions of the CoE Istanbul Convention.

In Libya, the EU continued to promote the role of civil society, reinforcing the capacities of CSOs through technical assistance and training, and supported human rights and gender equality. Moussawat, the first bilateral programme dedicated to gender equality in Tunisia, was completed in 2021 and contributed to improve the understanding of gender-related issues in the country (family planning, budgeting, and dialogue), women's participation in public and social life, and their economic autonomy, and elimination of violence against women. In Egypt in 2021, the EU completed the evaluation of the programme Enhancing Access of Children to Education and Fighting Child Labour, which provided incentives for poor families in remote areas to put, and keep, their children, particularly girls, in school. In Lebanon, the EU maintained its commitment in the field of basic education with a total amount of EUR 25 million for direct support to teachers and families. EU assistance also targeted out-of-school children with specific interventions in non-formal education. More than 110 000 children per year are supported by the EU to access education, representing close to 25 % of all children in public primary schools. Within the EU-funded programme Enhancing women's participation in decision-making and peace-building processes in Syria (EUR 2.5 million), the EuroMed feminist initiative supported a consultation process with over 250 Syrian activists, gender and legal experts from over 100 organisations and initiatives to demand structural change to ensure women's participation in decision-making and peace building processes in Syria.

Youth and culture

Youth in the Southern Neighbourhood often lacks the tools to voice their concerns and address issues to shape public narrative and policies. The EU fosters active and inclusive youth citizenship by amplifying youth voices in public policymaking as actors of change. Young Mediterranean Voices, which ended in March 2021, was an intercultural dialogue programme funded by the EU that contributed to empower young people to enhance a culture of dialogue, shape public affairs and media, and create a shared understanding with peers. Youth empowerment is at the core of the EU's action in the region, and specific programmes aim to enhance the role of culture and creativity as a vector for employment and resilience by unearthing the dormant potential of the cultural and creative industry to create economic value and decent jobs, enhance growth, and foster social inclusion.

Green deal

The Southern Neighbourhood is among the regions heavily concerned by the effects of climate change (SDG 13). Involvement of southern neighbours is indispensable to achieve the objectives of the Green Deal, in particular the zero-pollution and zero-emissions objectives. There is a large

political consensus on common objectives between the EU and its partners, as demonstrated in the adoption of UfM Ministerial Declarations on environment and climate action, and on energy in 2021. Cooperation is implemented to streamline climate action in national policies on the one hand, and on the other to support local authorities', including cities, climate action to help manage the growing urbanization and its related challenges, such as solid waste and residual waters management, and sustainable transport alternatives. Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea is a subject of common concern to partners on all shores and fresh water is increasingly scarce.

In Morocco, a new programme *Terre verte* has been designed in 2021 in support of the ecological development of agriculture and forest resources in the country (EUR 100 million) and to promote resilient, eco-efficient and innovative practices including in the use of water. Joint work on an ambitious Team Europe initiative on water in Tunisia started in 2021, with several Member States and European Financing Institutions, to ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation; the sustainable use of water resources and to combat climate change (SDG 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all). The UfM conference on environment and climate action took place in October 2021 in Cairo, co-chaired by Commission Vice President Timmermans. Meetings in the margin facilitated discussions on the UNFCCC COP26 and preliminary discussions on COP27 to be hosted by Egypt in 2022. In 2021, the EU continued support to the water sector through the flagship technical assistance programme EU Water Stars, which supports institutional reform and capacity building in the irrigation sector in Egypt. The EU played a crucial role for the fourth year running in the organisation of the Cairo Water Week that in 2021 featured Commissioner Oliver Várhelyi. In 2021, the EU approved a new programme to support Jordan's green transition and achieve its international climate change commitments. The initiative looks at the energy-water-food nexus. The EU will finance projects to turn waste and wastewater (which when purified can be used for irrigation) into energy. A particular focus will be on service provision for vulnerable Jordanians and refugees. The EU and Member States came together to launch a Team Europe initiative for sustainable water management, which will help Jordan, the second most water scarce country in the world, to address its chronic water shortages. A flagship initiative will be the realisation of the Aqaba Amman Desalination and Water Conveyor project, which will provide 300 million cubic meters of drinkable water to the country, thus answering Jordan's needs for fresh water while reducing exploitation of non-renewable water sources.

Sustainable growth and jobs

A regional programme on investment, jointly implemented with the OECD, aims to support sustainable growth and decent job creation through an integrated approach to improve the investment climate (SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). It supports the implementation of investment reforms to attract higher quality investments. Furthermore, the EU supports the development of trade capacities, including at intra and interregional levels, in one of the least integrated regions of the world. Work continued with financial institutions, notably the EIB and EBRD, under the Neighbourhood Investment Platform to finance the development of sustainable value chains and industrial clusters in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, focusing on the inclusion of SMEs into value chains. Integrating employment considerations in trade and investment policies is the objective of the Mainstreaming Employment into Trade and Investment programme implemented by the ILO.

At national level, a foreign direct investment (FDI) quality assessment took place in Jordan to provide tailored policy advice and capacity building on how to strengthen the impact of FDI on sustainable development. In 2021, the EU adopted a new EUR 12 million programme to support Libya's economic recovery. The programme will focus on fostering the emergence of an ecosystem to support start-ups, to improve Small and Medium Enterprises' (SMEs) capacities with the aim to create sustainable and decent jobs, and to improve policies and institutional capacities. Through support to Green Growth and Competitiveness of Morocco (EUR 105 million) the EU contributed to the competitiveness of the economy, in particular through actions aimed at strengthening the institutional and regulatory framework, streamlining procedures and facilitating trade, encouraging the emergence of the theme of green growth and energy efficiency and its consideration by the administration. It also enabled the establishment of a support system for start-ups, young project leaders and investors and the launching of a loan guarantee product for microfinance for the benefit of very small enterprises. In 2021, thanks to EU financial support, the EIB has made available USD 425 million in debt and risk sharing instruments to support Palestinian SMEs and micro-entrepreneurs. The initiative represents a coordinated effort between the EU and the EIB and forms part of the overall Team Europe initiative to support sustainable social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis in partner countries. PASSEM, a support programme for specific market surveillance (about EUR 4 million) was designed to enhance the capacity of Algerian stakeholders involved in industrial products certification in view of improving consumer protection and facilitating trade. In Syria, in the area of resilience, food Security and livelihoods, 1 750 farmers were provided with seeds, sheep and agricultural inputs and 300 small business received training on managing small business grants. Over 200 000 kg of local wheat was ground and produced as flour by a mill rehabilitated under an EU project. This produced more than 250 000 packs of bread.

Digitalisation, Science, Technology and Innovation

Working towards SDG 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation), the regional THE NEXT SOCIETY programme pursued its activities in 2021 through public/private dialogue to remove barriers to innovation and by supporting industrial clusters, start-ups and innovation actors to bring their innovative ideas to the market. A focus is also on women entrepreneurs (SDG 5). Half of the companies supported by the programme in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia have been founded or co-founded by women.

In Tunisia, the INNOV'I project continued to strengthen the ecosystem of innovative entrepreneurship/start-ups through support for the employment of young IT graduates in disadvantaged regions, funding the participation of start-ups in tech accelerators and conventions, and contributing to the creation of the major incubator The Dot — a private and publicly funded project that has become a multi-service digital centre in Tunis. In Egypt, the Team Europe initiative on connected economy and society has a strong digital pillar in close cooperation with EU Member States (France and Germany) and European Financing Institutions.

Migration

After more than a decade of conflict in Syria, the scale, severity and complexity of needs of the Syrian population remain extensive, while large-scale, conflict-related, displacement also persists at significant levels. Over 6.7 million Syrians are internally displaced and a further 5.6 million are refugees, primarily in neighbouring countries. In 2021, the EU adopted a substantial assistance

package in response to the Syrian crisis to support the Syrian population inside Syria (EUR 41 million), and through the EU Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis and as special measures under the NDICI-Global Europe, to support refugees from Syria and vulnerable host communities in Jordan (overall EUR 76 million) and Lebanon (overall EUR 188 million). Together with its Member States, the EU remains the largest donor in response to the crisis, having mobilised, so far, more than EUR 25 billion since 2011 and EUR 1.8 billion to assistance inside Syria, to support displaced people to ensure peace and stability.

In December 2021, the mandate of the EU Regional Trust Fund ended having reached an overall financial volume of EUR 2.38 billion. Co-chaired by the EU and the UN, the Fifth Brussels Conference on ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’ brought together over 80 countries together with international organisations, reaffirming the EU’s engagement. It succeeded in mobilising aid through pledges totalling EUR 5.3 billion for 2021 and beyond for Syria and the neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugee populations. Egypt has benefited from the EU Trust Fund for Africa with a total of EUR 91 million in bilateral and regional actions, including a EUR 60 million package to enhance the response to migration challenges. The bilateral migration programme aims to boost job opportunities in areas prone to migration, creating employment and building skills of young people as well as supporting labour-intensive infrastructure development in cities hosting migrants, and other actions (SMEs, skills, healthcare) for areas with a high concentration of migrants.

Governance, Peace and Security

Governance is a key factor in the wellbeing of citizens. Efficient public administrations serve the needs of citizens and businesses. The EU helps partner countries in undertaking reforms in the area of public administration and governance by providing technical support. Areas of intervention include the central and local administrations, digital government, public procurement, Better Regulation, the judicial system, and the fight against corruption and fraud. Euromed Justice, implemented by Eurojust, contributes to protect the EU neighbouring countries' citizens against criminal activities respecting the rule of law and fundamental human rights. The programme aims at strengthening judicial authorities' cooperation in criminal matters amongst South Partner Countries' national authorities, EU Member States' judicial authorities and other relevant judicial and law enforcement entities, therefore inching closer to SDG 17 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels).

In Tunisia, in 2021, the ongoing security sector reform programme provided training and equipment that contributed to increasing the capacity of internal security forces (e.g., in the area of inspection, anti-money laundering and human resources management). The construction of critical infrastructure related to border management and police training continued. In Morocco, the EU cooperation has contributed to the reform of the public finances of the Government with the achievement of objectives related to transparency and fair execution of public finances, as well as closer supervision on the performance of public entities and the delivery of public services. In Libya, the EU supports the reinforcement of public administration and public service delivery capacities at central and local levels. In 2021, the EU adopted a new EUR 8 million programme to support good governance and the rule of law, providing Institutional support to the House of Representatives. It will also seek to promote the participation of women in decision-making as well as access to high quality and efficient justice. The highly volatile political situation continued to affect greatly the

implementation of EU assistance to the Syrian population. It required high programmatic agility to uphold political parameters and enable robust risk monitoring of projects and mitigation measures. In 2021, programmes were deployed to strengthen the resilience and protect the rights of the Syrian population and its civil society organisations, and promote dialogue and social cohesion. In 2021, the EU continued to support Palestinian civil society organisations via multiple instruments aiming to promote and protect human rights and democratic governance, raising electoral awareness, and supporting the resilience of the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem. The EU has also been in the lead in the area of public finance management and administration reform.

4.4.2.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

Libya

After the fall of the Ghaddafi regime in 2011, several rounds of intense conflict between rival groups affected Libya's social fabric, basic services and national infrastructure. Despite the fragility of the political situation, the cease-fire has held for one year and has allowed for some improvements in access to basic services. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview, the number of internally displaced persons, refugees and migrants in need has reduced by 36 % (reaching 803 000 individuals in 2021). Migrants remain extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and often face discrimination to access public services such as healthcare, education and assistance programmes.

In 2021, the Commission provided EUR 9 million in humanitarian assistance to address health, protection, education and other basic needs of the most vulnerable people, and support humanitarian advocacy, coordination, and the UN Humanitarian Air Services. EUR 3 million was allocated to support access to COVID-19 vaccines for the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. In partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Commission ensured access to water for 500 000 people during electricity cuts in Benghazi through the provision of a backup generator for the Suluk pumping station.

Egypt

Egypt remains a country of destination and transit for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from the Middle East and East Africa. Over 270 000 registered refugees are stranded in the poorest neighbourhoods of cities such as Cairo and Alexandria. According to the UNHCR, 84 % of refugees live below the national poverty line, compared to 32.5 % of Egyptians. Syrians account for over 50 % of the refugees, with the remainder mainly from East Africa, Iraq, and Yemen.

The Commission allocated EUR 5 million in humanitarian funding in 2021 to provide basic needs assistance, education in emergencies and protection. Over 1 700 unaccompanied and separated children were supported to enter, re-enter or stay enrolled in formal education. Over 27 000 refugees and asylum seekers received multi-purpose cash assistance. An additional EUR 1 million was allocated to support the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign that reached 40 000 refugees. In 2021, the Commission also undertook a review of their programming priorities to better integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the national education programme, while mainstreaming protection and increasing coordination between humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding.

Sahrawi Crisis

Still without a resolution for the four-decade long political conflict, tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees remain stranded in a forgotten and protracted humanitarian crisis. Gathered in five camps around Tindouf in the Algerian Sahara Desert, the Sahrawi refugees depend on external humanitarian assistance. The political sensitivities, as well as extreme conditions thwart any short-term perspectives for return, integration or resettlement and deter the interest of development actors.

In 2021, the Commission deployed projects amounting to EUR 10 million to respond to the high vulnerability of Sahrawi refugees in camps. Assistance included food aid to tackle malnutrition among children and women, support to improve the quality of primary education, the supply of essential medicines covering 80 % of the health needs of the population, and provision of safe drinking water. With Commission funding in 2021, more than 50 % of the population received safe drinking water, in comparison to less than 30 % in 2019. The Commission also supported the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in camps.

4.4.2.5. Crisis response and preparedness

The EU continued to respond to ongoing crises in its southern neighbourhood.

In **Libya**, support for the implementation of the Berlin Declaration continues whilst additional crisis response measures were launched to respond to the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and the March 2021 appointment of the interim Government of National Unity. This included support to mediation, mine action, security sector reform and to the planned elections.

In **Syria**, the EU renewed its support for United Nations-led efforts for a political solution to the conflict. It also maintained its efforts to increase human security and stabilisation in the areas in northeast **Syria** liberated by the International Coalition from Da'esh including support in the health and water sectors, mine action, and efforts to reintegrate persons released from camps in the area.

In **Lebanon**, efforts to support inclusive, local level dialogue during the period of political tension was supported, while in **Palestine** efforts were continued to support the immediate needs of civilians following the May 2021 conflict in and around **Gaza**.

Under the IcSP, specific facilities established to support partner country efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism were instrumental in mobilising expertise and increasing the preparedness and response capacities of countries such as **Jordan**, **Morocco** and **Tunisia**, supporting the organisation of live exercises to test and improve operational response and inter-agency coordination.

Under the auspices of the EU Centres of Excellence Initiative for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear risk mitigation, a highly successful live exercise was organised in **Beirut**, bringing together six government entities as part of a coordinated response to a CBRN-related terrorist incident – a very difficult task given the national context.

Through financing via the CFSP budget, the European Union Integrated Border Management Assistance Mission in **Libya** (EUBAM Libya) continues to assist the Libyan authorities in developing state security structures, in particular on border management, law enforcement and criminal justice. Through its revised operational plans, EUBAM Libya has been mandated with the additional strategic

task of being ready to provide support to the UN-led efforts for peace within the Berlin Process, within the scope of EUBAM's core areas of engagement.

4.5. Enlargement (Western Balkans and Turkey)

4.5.1. Introduction (policy developments)

2021 was the first year of the Instrument for Pre-Accession III (IPA III) implementation under the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027.

Following the adoption of the IPA III Regulation in September 2021¹¹⁴, the legal basis to implement IPA III, the Commission implemented 89 % of the available 2021 IPA III commitment appropriations by 31 December.

Financial Assistance under IPA III is based on the IPA III Programming Framework¹¹⁵, which is an overarching European Commission strategic document for the use of IPA III funds for the duration of the 2021-2027 MFF, reflecting the specific objectives of the IPA III Regulation and is focused on the priorities of the enlargement process. It is articulated in five thematic windows which broadly correspond to the specific objectives of the Regulation:

- Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy;
- Window 2: Good governance, EU acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication;
- Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity;
- Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth; and
- Window 5: Territorial and cross border cooperation.

Actions are deployed, to the benefit of the IPA III beneficiaries through annual or multiannual action plans at national or regional level or through horizontal initiatives targeting specific types of partners (e.g., civil society) or cross-cutting issues. A significant amount of funds will be mobilised through financial instruments such as blending grants and loans and the provision of budgetary guarantees via the Western Balkans Investment Framework, a common financing platform where international financing institutions and Member States' agencies combine funds with IPA III to increase leverage and impact of EU support.

The programming of IPA III funds follows a two-stage approach, whereby in the first stage, IPA III beneficiaries prepare strategic responses outlining how their overall policies and sectoral strategies are in line with the recommendations and requirements of the specific policy instruments of the enlargement process. Such actions are screened on the basis of their policy relevance (first stage) and those that are approved are developed into fully fledged programmes which are assessed based on technical maturity (second stage). In this way the selected programmes fully comply with the key policy priorities of the enlargement process and are ready for implementation as soon as the financing decision is taken.

As regards the IPA COVID-19 financial assistance package to the Western Balkans, 89 % had been contracted and 61 % paid by the end of the year. Moreover, the MFA operations granted to Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo and North Macedonia have been successfully concluded with disbursements of the final instalments in 2021. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only the first instalment could be disbursed before the end of the availability period due to limited reform implementation.

¹¹⁴ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1529](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III).

¹¹⁵ [C\(2021\) 8914 final of 10 December 2021](#).

Support for building strong intra-regional economic ties by implementing the Common Regional Market (CRM) action plan, as agreed by the leaders of the Western Balkan 6 (WB6) at the Sofia Summit of the Berlin Process in 2020, continued in 2021. While technical-level work on the elimination of trade barriers and harmonisation of commercial policies progressed significantly, their implementation was halted by a more polarised political environment in the region. Decision-making processes in the two regional partners playing a crucial role in CRM implementation – the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Secretariat and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) – were also negatively affected by the political situation and in particular issues between Belgrade and Pristina.

A few major achievements were nevertheless reached in 2021:

- Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services to the CEFTA 2006 Agreement entered into force;
- As of 1 July 2021, full elimination of all roaming costs within the Western Balkan region in implementation of the Regional Roaming Agreement for the Western Balkans;
- The SEED+ project facilitating data transfers among customs authorities was extended to the region;
- Green Lanes were introduced among the WB6 to speed up the transport of priority goods; and
- EUR 100 million of investment was generated providing 3 000 jobs (out of which 2 000 were for women).

With regards to Turkey the financial cooperation under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance continued in line with the EU's political priorities. 2021 was the first year when the new programming approach under IPA III was implemented with greater focus on a sectoral approach, relevance and maturity. In 2021, the Commission adopted a package of pre-accession assistance for Turkey with a budget of EUR 208.5 million including support for people to people exchange, climate adaptation, rural development and the Civil Society Facility. The Commission started preparations for the establishment of the Turkey Investment Platform (TIP), allowing Turkey to participate in the European Fund for Sustainable Development +, the first time that Turkey will benefit from such a wide budgetary guarantee mechanism.

The EUR 6 billion Facility for Refugees in Turkey – a key component of the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement - continued to provide support to refugees and host communities in the country. The Facility provides some 1.8 million refugees with basic needs support, 695 000 refugee children with educational support and millions benefit from healthcare and protection services. The full operational budget of the Facility was contracted at the end of 2020 and EUR 4.5 billion has been disbursed to date. Turkey and the EU further built on this fruitful cooperation and an additional EUR 3.6 billion in EU refugee support was mobilised for 2020-23. Within this framework, EUR 560 million were allocated under the Facility's humanitarian leg in 2021 to ensure the continuation of education support to refugees in Turkey and to support migration and border management. Under the Facility's humanitarian leg, EUR 300 million of humanitarian assistance were also mobilised.

The European Commission's institution-building instruments supported the IPA countries in their bilateral reform processes. In 2021, TAIEX organised 94 events mobilising over 4 000 participants. There were also 36 Twinning projects ongoing (EUR 50 million) covering a wide range of areas such as justice and home affairs, finance, internal market and economic policy.

EU engagement with civil society organisations remains strong. Non-governmental actors in enlargement partner countries in the Western Balkans and Turkey are able to draw on the newly adopted Civil Society Facility and Media programme under IPA III with a total funding of EUR 218 million for the 2021-2023 period.

4.5.2. Working together towards the SDGs

The IPA has a strong focus on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) since rule of law remains the cornerstone of the accession process and will determine enlargement partners' overall pace of progress on their path towards the EU. IPA III programmes in the area of rule of law focus on strengthening the legislative and institutional framework and capacities of the IPA III beneficiaries, including criminal justice actors, as well as providing support to actors, including civil society and media, that contribute to an enabling environment for rule-of-law based societies.

The economic and investment plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans and the Green Agenda, cover the alignment of the Western Balkans with the goals of the European Green Deal, aim at spurring the long-term recovery of the region, supporting a green and digital transition, boosting economic growth and supporting reforms to move forward on the EU path.

Therefore, the EIP and the Green Agenda, through a significant package of public investments, technical assistance and budgetary guarantees, support several SDGs, especially affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), environment and climate action (SDG 13), and innovation and industry (SDG 9). However, the EIP aims also at boosting private sector development and employment through its flagship initiatives on private sector competitiveness and on establishing youth guarantees in the region, hence contributing also to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth).

With regard to SDG 4 (Quality education), Through the Erasmus+ programme, the EU supports higher education cooperation and mobility opportunities in the Western Balkans¹¹⁶. During the period 2014-2020 there were 50 000 short-term mobilities (students and staff) planned and funded by the Instrument for Pre-Accession II, 405 Erasmus Mundus scholarships funded to Western Balkans students, 112 capacity-building in higher education projects coordinated by higher education institutions in the region and 51 Jean Monnet projects selected with higher education institutions in the region.

In 2021 there were limited calls open for the regions outside the EU. Two of the selected Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters from call 2021 had partners from the Western Balkans and 19 students from the region were selected for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master scholarships. In Jean Monnet Actions, in total 12 projects with applicants from the Western Balkans were selected. 21 capacity building in youth projects with organisations located in the Western Balkans were selected. Organisations from the Western Balkans were involved in four Erasmus+ Virtual Exchanges projects selected from call 2021.

¹¹⁶ Serbia and North Macedonia are associated to Erasmus+ and participate on equal footing with EU Member States.

4.5.3. Implementation

Human development

The Commission supports the Western Balkans to foster the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the development of human capital also through the provision of funding, in particular as regards the reform priorities identified in the Economic Reform programme in the areas of education and skills, employment, and social protection and inclusion. Emphasis is also given to youth, health, culture and sport.

In 2021, actions in different areas contributing to Human development were adopted as part of the annual action plan for each of the IPA III beneficiaries. At regional level, the two new actions Socioux+ and EU4Youth will support the Western Balkans in developing employment and social protection strategies, systems and policies that are more inclusive, effective, responsive, resilient and sustainable. They will also contribute to the improvement of education systems by benchmarking educational provision in mathematics, science, computer and information literacy, and by giving a voice to teachers and school leaders in the education policy debate.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the action EU4 Mitigating Socio-Economic Consequences of COVID-19 pandemic will strengthen the established systems of social service delivery (institutional and non-institutional) for vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic and will contribute to economic growth, job security and a system of better social protection and inclusion.

In Serbia, the action EU for enabling a more responsive healthcare system will contribute to enhancing the resilience and further reform of the healthcare system, enhancing resilience, social inclusion and emergency responses. This will be achieved through investing in structures for detecting and responding to epidemiological hazards and capacity development of the healthcare institutions.

As regards ongoing assistance, the focus on young people continued including through the signing of a new EUR 4 million programme in support of the school exchanges programme of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. The second regional thematic Youth Lab was held in the Western Balkans region discussing matters relating to mental health. A new project was signed with the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative focussing on enhancing access to finance for Roma entrepreneurs or businesses employing Roma. The Regional Housing programme continued to provide homes to refugees and persons displaced by conflicts in the region in the 1990s (8 826 homes provided by the end of 2021).

In Kosovo, two projects provided positive impact on gender issues through direct and indirect enhancement of women farmers/agribusinesses. In Albania, the EU4Schools programme addresses reconstruction of education facilities severely damaged by the earthquake. So far, 19 schools have been completed and around 6 000 children are studying in new and modern facilities.

EU support to both individuals and civil society organisations in Turkey remains critical in a context where space for civil society continues to shrink. The EU continued to reinforce the capacity of rights-based civil society organisations as key players in a functioning democracy, including through core funding and reaching out to smaller size organisations. The flagship Sivil Düşün project provided 319 such organisations with more than EUR 1 million of in-kind support, hosted two nationwide digital fora, organised 17 Info Days and carried out three nationwide campaigns.

Green Deal

The European Commission supported climate change mitigation and adaptation through policy development and implementation, EU acquis alignment, technical assistance and investments for the clean energy transition and low carbon technologies. In addition to dedicated actions, environment and climate change considerations were mainstreamed in different areas of cooperation

In October 2021, the Regional Cooperation Council with the support of the European Commission finalised the 2021-2030 action plan for the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, in consultation with the region.

In 2021, new actions with a climate adaptation and/or mitigation as principal objective were adopted as part of the annual action plan for each of the IPA III beneficiaries.

In Serbia, the EU for Connectivity and Green Agenda action will support the construction of a regional sanitary landfill, increase the financial potential of the National Energy Efficiency Fund and increase sustainable transport by modernising 120 kms of railway. IPA III funds in Albania and Montenegro will help to effectively manage protected areas according to the EU acquis and best practices.

In North Macedonia, financial support will be geared towards improving the ecological and chemical status of water in the transboundary Prespa Lake. Improvement of air quality is also foreseen in large cities through addressing the air pollution caused by heating and transport systems. In Kosovo, support is foreseen for environmental hazards emerging from air, water and waste pollution, and to promote sustainable waste management.

In addition, key capacity building is channelled to Western Balkan partners via the Austrian Environmental Agency. The Global Covenant of Mayors, now extended also to the Western Balkans and Turkey, started implementation. Finally, a flagship project achieved recently, the construction of the biomass heating plant in Kosovo, has supported Gjakova city in its transition from an oil-based district heating system to a biomass-based system, which provides heating to around 40 % of the citizens. The plant includes a cogeneration unit to produce electricity.

In Turkey, the Environment and Climate Change, Sustainable Green Energy and Transport action aims at boosting capacities to draft a legislative and strategic framework as well as and carry out monitoring and measurement for efficient heating/cooling; improve the energy performance of the existing building stock in order to decrease public expenditures on energy consumption; and target maritime decarbonisation and green shipping.

TAIEX also contributed to the European Green Deal through a dedicated flagship event series with all NEAR partners including those in the Western Balkans. The event series informed the partner administrations about EU policies and outlined what the Commission is doing to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. Other topics included the redesigning of economic and environmental policies in line with sustainable production and consumption principles as well as food safety, reduction of food losses and re-use of water for agricultural purposes. Since the implementation of the first Flagship, TAIEX implemented 80 follow-up activities in 2021 with over 500 EU experts and over 3 500 public officials from partner administrations.

Sustainable growth and jobs

The economic and investment plan (EIP) and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans also include important measures to support job creation with the important contributions of the European Fund for Sustainable Development plus (EFSD+).

In Albania, a new programme will support the transformation to a more innovation-driven and knowledge-based economy through access to finance for start-ups. In Bosnia and Herzegovina a new IPA III action aims at mitigating the negative socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic by contributing to economic growth, job security, social protection and inclusion, with a focus on micro, small and medium enterprises and start-ups. In Kosovo, the area of intervention is on agri-food operators; likewise in Serbia the new action will support private sector development, trade, and research and innovation in agriculture and rural development. North Macedonia's 'Greening Business' Facility will channel funds to the private sector in support of the greening of the economy and enhancing the circular economy.

These new programmes will add to on-going activities already supporting micro and small enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic (4 400 MSMEs and 7 000 beneficiaries supported in North Macedonia). Similarly in Kosovo a blending facility co-funded by the EU and EBRD offers a credit line to enterprises that have the potential for export, import substitution and job creation (so far, more than 80 investment projects have been supported). In Serbia, already 1 360 companies received loans from a guarantee facility supporting Micro and SMEs, start-ups and innovative companies.

Digitalisation, Science, Technology and Innovation

The EIP provides direct support for innovation and green growth and contributes to address the policy objectives of the Green Agenda and the Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Agenda ('Innovation Agenda') for the Western Balkans. Investing in the competitiveness of the private sector entails ensuring the availability and reliability of affordable and diversified access to finance for start-ups and MSMEs that will support them to grow and expand. It also entails addressing barriers hindering an adequate business climate development at economies and regional level.

During 2021, the support to the development of the private sector through blending instruments was integrated under the Western Balkans Investment Framework, where 'digital transition' represents a key area of investment, especially to strengthen the digitalisation of the business sector in the region. Support to the integration of research and development results in the business sector, innovation and technology transfer are also provided as well as enabling digital eco-systems (including incubators, accelerators through fin-techs, venture capital, and other innovative instruments), digital innovation hubs and other forms of business and innovation clusters. Synergies with the activities of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology Knowledge Innovation Communities is promoted together with links to sectoral and/or local smart specialisation strategies.

In Albania a new action for Innovation will accelerate the transformation to a more innovation-driven and knowledge-based economy embracing the opportunities from the green and digital transition, unlocking its human capital and entrepreneurial potential, and thereby increasing its competitiveness.

The EU continued its support for research and the private sector in Turkey, increasing competitiveness and productivity and fostering innovation, covering almost all productive sectors. EU

support reached a total of EUR 221 million, delivered through 42 projects. There is now an increasing interest in the European Green Deal from Turkish business and research communities.

Migration

The Commission continued supporting the Western Balkans in their capacity to effectively and humanely manage mixed migratory flows in line with international and EU standards. The support focused on equipping the region to take part in EU level work, as well as on providing direct support to the reception conditions of migrants arriving in the region from the EU. EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies, the EU Border and Coast guard Agency (EUBCGA/Frontex) and the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) were at the forefront of efforts to bring the region ever closer to the EU.

In 2021, new programmes on migration management and border security were adopted to support Western Balkans beneficiaries with: identification, registration and referral at borders; migration statistics; asylum and reception systems; management of returns; alternatives to detention; and EU-aligned contingency planning and crisis response capacities. An additional programme will operationalise the implementation of Frontex Status Agreements with the region and support alignment of Integrated Border Management strategies with EU standards. Bosnia and Herzegovina will receive specific support on border and migration capabilities including in the area of combatting and preventing migrant smuggling and human trafficking.

With EU support, the region has worked closely with the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA) to identify areas and strategies for ensuring efficient and rights-based asylum and reception systems. This is key for migration management to become effective and humane. Since 2019, four Roadmaps to support the further development of asylum and reception systems in line with EU standards have been concluded and endorsed with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia. At the requests of the authorities of Montenegro and Kosovo two further Roadmaps have been prepared. The Roadmap with Montenegro was endorsed on the margins of the Brdo Ministerial in early December 2021.

Governance, Peace and Security

A core objective of the European Union's engagement with the Western Balkans is to prepare them to meet all the requirements of EU membership. Fundamental democratic and rule of law reforms in areas such as access to justice, the fight against corruption and serious and organised crime, the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, and good administration are at the heart of this agenda and the work of the Commission in support of the region.

In 2021, several new programmes were adopted in support of stronger rule of law-based societies. In Albania, a new programme will support investments and capacity building in the implementation of the ambitious justice reform. Justice reform and the capacity of the anti-corruption police are the focus of a new programme in North Macedonia. At regional level, the conditions for justice reforms in all Western Balkans partners and Turkey will be enhanced by the supporting evidence-based policymaking on justice system performance, focussing on gathering data and providing analysis on justice reform progress.

In terms of the fight against serious and organised crime, the EU will tackle cross-border crime in North Macedonia, including by supporting the implementation of integrated border management. The EU Support to Regional Security in the Western Balkans programme will support cooperation within the region and with the EU to respond to organised crime and terrorism, and the

establishment of integrated border management structures. The safety of local populations is further enhanced through a number of demining activities implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo.

The fundamental rights of Roma in the enlargement region will further be strengthened through the EU support to fundamental rights of Roma in the Western Balkans and Turkey programme. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU4Electoral Process programme will contribute to improve the integrity, transparency, and efficiency of the electoral process.

Better governance continues to be supported through new regional programmes to support economic governance and public administration reform in line with the Principles of Public Administration and the European integration process. The EU for Better Municipal Governance programme in Kosovo will provide funding to municipalities to further improve their performance in democratic governance, municipal management and municipal service delivery.

Reflecting the key role played by civil society and media in democratic and pluralistic societies based on the rule of law, programmes in this area were also adopted in 2021.

In terms of implementation, a highlight of 2021 was the stronger engagement for equality and tolerance supported by the EU at a regional level in response to the rise in hate speech and the glorification of war crimes in the Western Balkans. With EU support, the Council of Europe launched the regional campaign 'Block the hatred - Share the love' that reached 413 105 Facebook users. The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) focused on sharing facts established in the cases adjudicated by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, thereby fighting disinformation. The programme reached over 1 500 000 people through its social media campaigns.

Flagship projects such as the EU-Turkey Business Dialogue and EU-Turkey Town Twinning have helped the business community and local government to establish and strengthen their ties with their EU peers to address common challenges, including climate change.

Finally, the annual TAIEX International Forum for Prosecutors enabled closer cooperation of over 150 public prosecutors from the EU Member States and NEAR partners including those in the Western Balkans, to tackle emerging topics such as the use of cryptocurrencies for criminal purposes and cross-border wildlife crime.

Cross-border cooperation

The new nine IPA III cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes 2021-2027 among the IPA beneficiaries are scheduled to be adopted in early 2022, as well as the 15 Interreg IPA CBC programmes with IPA allocations.

Implementation of CBC programmes under IPA II, with the overall aim to support reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, has continued in several thematic priorities including tourism, cultural and natural heritage; environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, employment, labour mobility, social and cultural inclusion, competitiveness, business, trade and investment.

Projects have contributed to the development of some economically important sectors, such as tourism, creating a sustainable tourist offer in the region based on cultural heritage and local cuisine. Examples of these projects are the rehabilitation of Medieval Fortresses and Austro-Hungarian

Fortresses in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, the Cultural Route 'On the Trail of Mother Teresa' and local cuisine as tourism offers. Other projects that have also had a positive impact on tourism have supported the preservation of wildlife and the promotion of natural values, while increasing the safety of tourists in the mountains and promoting tourism services to international and domestic visitors.

Other projects in the CBC programmes have contributed to improve resource efficiency in the water and waste management sectors, to the creation of a stimulating and innovative environment in youth educational institutions to bring the concept of social entrepreneurship closer to young people and enable greater involvement through employment and social start-ups.

Regarding the Interreg IPA programmes, it is also worth noting that the support also included actions in the fields of border crossing management and mobility and migration management, including the protection and economic and social integration of third-country nationals.

In peripheral cross-border areas, these programmes are deeply incorporated in the lives of local communities, reinforcing relations between the local population and the EU and re-establishing and strengthening the ties between the neighbours.

CASE STUDY

A 'Team Europe' approach to the implementation of the economic and investment plan in the Western Balkans.

After the presentation of the economic and investment plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans in October 2020, the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) launched in early 2021 the 6th investment grant call for proposals with the objective of supporting the implementation of EIP flagship investments. In response to the call, Western Balkans partners submitted an impressive number of project applications amounting to nearly EUR 4 billion of investments. After the screening of the submitted applications, a list of 21 investment projects with total costs exceeding EUR 3 billion and requesting EUR 1.1 billion of IPA III assistance was presented to the WBIF Operational Board on 17 December 2021.

Over 120 participants attended, including representatives from EU Member States, the European Parliament, representatives of the Western Balkan partners, Norway, Financial Institutions, and the Energy and Transport Community Secretariats. The WBIF bilateral donors, underlining the 'Team Europe' approach of WBIF, announced new pledges for over EUR 11 million to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund (EWBJF) to contribute to the EUR 3.2 billion allocated by the European Commission to WBIF 2021-2027 in December 2021.

A formal Written Procedure that concluded on 22 February 2022 followed the meeting.

4.5.4. Humanitarian aid and civil protection – responding to the emergency needs of people affected by conflicts and disasters

Turkey

Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world of 4 million people. Out of those, 3.7 million are Syrians, who fled the ongoing conflict that has been ravaging Syria for over 10 years, the others are mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. The vast majority of refugees in Turkey live outside

camps amongst the Turkish population with limited access to basic services. The EU funds humanitarian projects in Turkey to help vulnerable refugees receive the support they need in close coordination with the Turkish authorities. In 2021, the EU humanitarian assistance reached more than 2.4 million vulnerable refugees in Turkey.

CASE STUDIES



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The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)

Hiba's schooling ended abruptly when the war in Syria started, and with her subsequent move to Istanbul. Her dream is to become a musician to give people hope with her songs. Things have not been easy for Hiba's family. "We are facing financial challenges," she says. Hiba buys daily necessities like bread and vegetables with an EU-funded debit card. She is one of 1.8 million people who received support through the EU's humanitarian flagship programme in Turkey in 2021: the [Emergency Social Safety Net \(ESSN\)](#). The ESSN is a social assistance scheme that helps the refugee population buy what they need mostly through monthly cash transfers. It is the single largest humanitarian programme in the history of the EU and implemented by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Turkish Red Crescent¹¹⁷. To help vulnerable refugees during the coronavirus pandemic and economic challenges, the EU has further adapted its humanitarian response to meet newly emerging needs. For example, the EU increased the monthly transfer value by 30 % and provided one-off payments to help refugees with the devastating economic impact of coronavirus.

Conditional Cash Transfers for Education (CCTE)

Emel wants to be a doctor when she grows up. Her family left war-torn Syria for Turkey eight years ago. Emel now attends school in Turkey, and her family receives regular cash transfers as part of the EU's largest-ever humanitarian programme for education in emergencies. [The Conditional Cash Transfers for Education \(CCTE\)](#) aims to encourage school enrolment and to improve pupils' attendance by supporting vulnerable refugee families whose children attend school regularly through bi-monthly cash transfers. "She started going to school and making friends with other children," says Emel's mother Veheba. "The support has made a big difference." Implemented by UNICEF, in collaboration with the Turkish authorities and the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), the CCTE helped over 625 000 children with cash support to continue their education in 2021, and just under 35 000 children received child protection services to further ensure their enrolment.

These flagship programmes have been complemented by other humanitarian aid projects addressing protection issues, including registration, legal counselling, psychosocial support, access to civil documentation, and specialised healthcare services.

¹¹⁷ In July 2021 ESSN successfully handed over the most vulnerable refugees, to another EU funded project: C-ESSN (Complementary ESSN). As a result of this transition, from July 2021 ESSN continued to assist 1.5 million people.

Western Balkans

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, in 2021 the number of refugees and migrants present in the country varied between 3 500 and 8 000, with the majority accommodated in the EU-funded reception centres located in the Sarajevo and Una Sana Cantons. In 2021 the humanitarian situation has improved and is no longer seen as a crisis, thanks to the concerted efforts of humanitarian partners, investment in proper infrastructure by the EU but also strong engagement of national and local authorities. The establishment of the multipurpose centre in Lipa, opened in mid-November 2021, has helped to increase the reception capacity in the country to nearly 5 300 beds. In 2021, the EU allocated EUR 5 million in humanitarian aid. The actions implemented by the Danish Refugee Council and Save the Children addressed the most urgent needs of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, allowing the beneficiaries to access basic healthcare services including COVID-19 testing and treatment, mental health and psychosocial support. The EU humanitarian funding also provided specialised protection services for vulnerable individuals and outreach assistance directed towards those sleeping in inadequate conditions.

4.5.5. Crisis response and preparedness

In the **Western Balkans**, the EU swiftly reacted with a crisis response action to increase community stability in the area when tensions towards the presence of migrants from parts of the host community in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** flared up in early 2021. Furthermore, the existing Instrument contributing to Peace and Stability (IcSP) engagement in the **Western Balkans** continued notably on the implementation of the **Serbia-Kosovo dialogue and with a new set of confidence building measures in Kosovo** through cultural heritage protection.

In **Turkey**, actions through the IcSP continue to respond to the regional consequences of the conflict in **Syria**, notably by enhancing access to services and facilitating the integration of refugees and migrants as well as strengthening the resilience of host communities.

Moreover, support to the search and rescue capacities of the Turkish Coast Guard was completed.

4.6. Overseas countries and territories (OCTs)

4.6.1. Introduction (policy developments)

The OCTs have been associated with the EU since the Treaty of Rome. They are not sovereign countries but maintain special constitutional links with three Member States: Denmark, France and the Netherlands. Cooperation with the OCTs is based on EU values and shared policy priorities. OCTs are considered important EU outposts in their respective regions.

The new Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG)¹¹⁸ updated the legal framework of the EU OCT partnership. The DOAG frames the EU-OCT political and policy dialogue, and trade and financial support of the EU to the OCTs' actions. Such actions contribute to their economic and social development and help them in tackling challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss. For the first time, the DOAG incorporates the Greenland Decision, placing cooperation with all OCTs firmly within the same instrument and source of funding, the EU Budget (OCTs other than Greenland previously benefitted from the European Development Fund).

¹¹⁸ Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021 on the association of the Overseas countries and territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other: [EUR-Lex - 32021D1764 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

The EU has earmarked financial support of EUR 500 million to the OCTs for 2021-2027. The resources available to the OCTs are (Annex 1 of the DOAG): EUR 225 million for bilateral cooperation with Greenland; EUR 164 million for bilateral cooperation with other OCTs; EUR 76 million for regional cooperation and integration; a non-allocated reserve of EUR 13 million for emerging needs and EUR 22 million for technical assistance.

Three regional programmes will foster cooperation among OCTs in the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions respectively that share similar challenges and priorities. Finally, a dedicated intra-regional envelope of EUR 15 million will for the first time encourage cooperation with neighbouring ACP and other third countries and EU outermost regions.

4.6.2. Working together towards the SDGs

The partnership supports the OCT's sustainable development and promotes EU values in the wider world. Interventions promote long-term sustainable economic development and welfare in the OCTs. In the coming years, the Green Deal is emerging as a pivotal priority for the partnership given the specific vulnerabilities and needs of the OCTs as islands. This includes climate action, environment, biodiversity and sustainable energy transition, as well as digital technologies, circular economy and investments for sustainable growth and jobs, which are all very relevant areas for OCTs. In addition, support to education and youth will continue to contribute to OCT's sustainable development.

EU – OCT actions pursue the following goals of the 2030 Agenda and the UN SDGs:

- SDG 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

OCTs share particular vulnerabilities resulting in a complex set of food security and nutrition challenges. For 2021-2027, the EU will support sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition in the Pacific region (Regional multiannual indicative programme (MIP), EUR 36 million) and in Sint Eustatius (EUR 2.9 million). Complementary work with other SDGs (SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment) is essential to strengthen the human development of each OCT.

- SDG 4 Quality education

Access to quality education fosters equality and is essential for achieving sustainable growth and jobs. This is the rationale of the main priority area of EU cooperation with Greenland 2021-2027 with EUR 202.5 million earmarked for education support.

Through the Erasmus+ programme, the EU also supports higher education opportunities and mobility for students and academia in all OCTs, although Heading 2 funds are used for these territories. This facilitates generation and sharing of knowledge, reinforcing intercultural dialogue and understanding. OCT participation has more than doubled since 2018, in the number of both projects and beneficiaries. From 87 projects with 41 beneficiaries (total EUR 3.2 million) in 2018, participation grew to 177 projects and 95 beneficiaries (EUR 5.5 million) in 2020.

- SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation

As part of the broader EU support to access to water and sanitation, interventions related to the construction of wastewater collection systems and of treatment facilities contribute to delivery on SDG 6. The 2021-2027 MIP for French Polynesia will invest up to EUR 31.1 million in the priority area of water and sanitation, a key challenge in this archipelago of 75 inhabited islands.

- SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy

Sustainable energy is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement targets and meeting the long-term objectives of the clean energy transition and decarbonisation process. The 2021-2027 MIPs for New Caledonia (EUR 30.9 million), Sint Maarten (EUR 7.7 million) and Saba (EUR 4.1 million) will support sustainable energy transition through developing the necessary policy, legal framework and infrastructure in the energy sector, thereby providing further impetus to ensure access to sustainable energy.

- SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth

The envisaged EU support 2021-2027 for sustainable tourism (Saint Pierre et Miquelon, EUR 27 million), green growth (Greenland, EUR 22.5 million), sustainable agriculture (Sint Eustatius, EUR 2.9 million) and digital (Aruba, EUR 14.2 million) will drive progress in ensuring sustained economic growth, full employment and decent work.

- SDG 13 Climate action, SDG 14 Life below water and SDG 15 Life on land

The OCTs are especially vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation due to their geographical locations and characteristics. The ongoing all-OCT thematic programme, Green Overseas GO, and the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific regional programmes (for a total of EUR 97.8 million) from the 11th EDF are all dedicated to ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, protecting biodiversity and supporting climate actions and resilience, and showing the vital importance of these areas to all OCTs.

EU support to protecting biodiversity will continue to be the priority area for cooperation with the French Southern and Antarctic Lands in 2021-2027 (EUR 4 million). This will build on the on-going Indian Ocean regional programme which aims at improving surveillance and observation of terrestrial and marine nature and restoring ecosystems. The 2021-2027 MIP for Saint-Barthélemy (EUR 2.5 million) will support disaster risk management and climate adaptation.

In addition, the on-going BEST Initiative has helped OCTs to promote the EU's environmental standards and provided an incentive for local actors to engage in environmental actions. The new LIFE programme 2021-2027 will continue to scale up the actions in OCTs on biodiversity and nature conservation.

All ongoing programmes have advanced SDGs 13, 14 and 15 on the ground as a good basis for future work. The European Green Deal will inform and inspire new EU-OCT cooperation on environment, climate change and biodiversity.

- SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals

The 2019-2024 Commission took office with the mandate to ensure a stronger Europe in the world in the spirit of reinforcing partnerships. By these means the geopolitical Commission strives to advance EU strategic interests and objectives abroad and defends a rules- and values-based international order in an increasingly polarised world. The EU-OCT partnership, enshrined in the DOAG, is an

integral part of this approach to advance issues of common interest. The progress achieved so far will be consolidated and reinforced in the coming period.

4.6.3. Implementation

Institutional dialogue

The institutional political and policy dialogues foreseen in the previous OAD and the newly adopted Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG)¹¹⁹ have continued throughout the year despite the sanitary circumstances prevailing in 2021 due to the COVID-19 crisis. Four tripartite consultation meetings were held in April, July, October and December 2021, chaired by the Commission, with participation from OCTs and relevant EU Member States. Two partnership working parties took place - one on environment, climate change and sustainable energy in June and one on trade and regional integration in November 2021.

Bilateral cooperation (territorial and regional)

The implementation of the DOAG is carried-out through MIPs. MIPs set out the priority areas for EU financing and cooperation. Programming dialogues and internal consultations during 2021 resulted in 11 of 15 MIPs for EU-OCT cooperation adopted in December 2021, as detailed below. Four further MIPs will follow as soon as possible.

OCTS in the Caribbean region

With the adoption of five MIPs for Aruba, Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten and Saint-Barthélemy, cooperation will focus on digitalisation and green deal as shared priorities. The remaining three MIPs (Bonaire, Curaçao and Caribbean Regional) require further dialogue with the OCT authorities and will be adopted as soon as possible.

The cooperation with Dutch OCTs has achieved good progress in the implementation of the 11th EDF. Bonaire and Aruba are two successful examples with significant results achieved despite COVID-19 constraints. Cooperation with Bonaire advanced well in the field of youth with the establishment of a childcare regulation and comprehensive child development centres. Higher education cooperation with Aruba also saw significant progress with the roll out of the innovative STEM curriculum designed by the university programme.

OCTs in the Pacific region

The adoption of two MIPs for New Caledonia and French Polynesia will reinforce our partnership with these territories and focus our cooperation on the green deal priority. The remaining MIP for Wallis and Futuna requires further dialogue with the territorial authorities and will be adopted as soon as possible.

Our cooperation with Pacific OCTs achieved good progress with the implementation of the 11th EDF. New Caledonia continued to undertake efforts in the employment sector through better access to training programmes. French Polynesia mitigated adverse effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector with a positive deployment of its tourism strategy, and a follow-up strategy has been drafted

¹¹⁹ Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021 on the association of the Overseas countries and territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other: [EUR-Lex - 32021D1764 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

and is under the review and consultation process. Wallis and Futuna expanded digital services linked to the Tui-Samoa broadband cable¹, improving tele-medicine facilities in the territory.

Greenland

Greenland benefited from a contribution of EUR 33.22 million from the 2020 EU budget focusing on education. This programme supports the reform of the school system, contributing to improving school management and upgrading teachers' skills. The newly adopted MIP will deepen the education sector reform in Greenland with a new two-year budget support programme of EUR 60 million about to start in 2022. In addition, a new Green Growth sector will support the Government's effort to expand clean energy, protect and make the most of Greenland's natural riches, and develop sustainably.

Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon

In Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, satisfactory progress was made in implementing the sustainable tourism pillar of the Strategic Development Plan for the territory. Despite the pandemic, the territory was able to undertake measures to mitigate the impacts of the crisis as well as to build a more resilient tourism sector post COVID-19.

Regional and all-OCTs cooperation

One thematic and three regional programmes are being implemented under the 11th EDF. The 12 UK territories continue to benefit from these programmes until their closure following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The Pacific regional programme (PROTEGE, EUR 36 million) contributes to protecting biodiversity and enhancing renewable natural resources, the Caribbean regional programme (ReSEMBID, EUR 40 million) focuses on resilience, sustainable energy and marine biodiversity, and the Indian Ocean regional programme (EUR 4 million) aims to improve the surveillance of terrestrial and marine ecosystems in the French Southern and Antarctic Lands, restoring ecosystems and reinforcing prevention. The all-OCTs thematic programme (Green Overseas, EUR 17.8 million) focuses on sustainable energy, climate change and disaster risk management.

The Caribbean regional programme, which is also our main channel of COVID-19 support for Caribbean OCTs, accelerated its implementation. All grants for projects are now being contracted and carried out by the beneficiaries, despite earlier challenges with the calls for proposals. The programme also achieved significant results with a certificate course on disaster risk financing.

The Pacific regional programme advanced notably with the sharing of best agricultural practices among the OCTs. The programme has been extended by one year (until October 2024) in response to implementation delays due to the pandemic.

The Indian Ocean regional programme completed its second year of implementation. Important activities have already been carried out, particularly for environmental monitoring and the preparation of biosecurity measures (feasibility studies and planification is on-going for four operations).

Green Overseas successfully conducted its inception phase in 2021 and started working with the beneficiaries to exchange best practices and refine areas of collaboration for the upcoming implementation of pilot projects. It will run until 2026.

Finally, through an operating grant in 2020, the Commission continued supporting the OCT Association (OCTA) in its mandate of representing the OCTs and facilitating dialogue between the EU and OCT partners and the overall implementation of the partnership.

Lessons learnt

Budget support is generally a preferred implementation modality for OCTs’ territorial allocations. It is an efficient way of addressing cross-cutting, long-term and structural challenges, of focusing on the results of territorial policies, and of maintaining a constructive policy dialogue. Practice confirms that this modality provides satisfactory results in OCTs through a high level of appropriation from local authorities.

CASE STUDIES



Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon-EU cooperation: Reinforcing the Archipelago’s economy (SDG 8)

Following the 1990’s fishing moratorium, which caused severe economic and demographic challenges to Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, the EU has been providing support to boost the archipelago’s economic resilience.

© Henryk Sadura/Shutterstock.com The EU supported the implementation of the Government’s Strategic Development Plan, favouring economic diversification and demographic stability. The EU has supported Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon’s budget with an average envelope of EUR 4 to 5 million per year since 2006, which is approximately 40 % of the Archipelago’s investments.

This allowed Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon to boost infrastructure, transport, sustainable tourism and entrepreneurship. The support contributed to an increase in the number of tourists (+39 %) and registered companies (+27 %) and a decrease in unemployment (-54 %) from 2009 to 2019. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has put important socio-economic pressures on the tourism sector, but measures were undertaken to mitigate the impacts of this crisis and to build a more resilient economy post COVID-19.



Bonaire-EU cooperation: Empowering Bonaire’s youth (SDG 4)

A significant proportion of Bonaire’s young population faces social hardship due to growing up in vulnerable single-parent households. For this reason, the EU and Bonaire joined hands to build better social and developmental prospects for children in this Dutch OCT in the Caribbean. Youth empowerment is at the heart of the EU-Bonaire partnership agenda.

© Stephan Kogelman/Shutterstock.com In Bonaire, the EU support contributed to key milestones: firstly, the adoption of childcare regulations and secondly, the operationalisation of two comprehensive child development centres. These centres offer a stimulating space for the youngest members of society to enhance their social, physical and intellectual potential. Strong attention is given to improve the quality of educational programmes within these centres. Thirdly, in 2021, a pilot initiative of inclusive childcare for children with special needs was also introduced by six childcare

organisations together with one centre's multi-disciplinary care team ensuring no kid is left behind. The pilot project is mostly aimed at children aged 1 to 12 who have special needs.

5. Managing Aid

5.1. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

5.1.1. Reporting

Reporting on NDICI-Global Europe instrument

The NDICI-Global Europe instrument has introduced a set of requirements to monitor and report on progress towards its objectives throughout its implementation. The Global Europe Results Framework (GERF) is the main tool which has been specifically developed to meet these monitoring and reporting requirements. The GERF includes all key performance indicators contained in Annex 6 of the Regulation establishing the instrument. They will be used together with data from other existing results reporting, external monitoring reviews and evaluations to assess the extent to which specific objectives have been achieved.

Reporting requirements cover all regions and modalities established by the NDICI-Global Europe instrument, including the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). 2021 is the first year of implementation of the NDICI-Global Europe and the first operational results are only expected to materialise as of 2023, given the programming and implementation cycle. Indeed, due to the inevitable time lag between financing an intervention and implementing the intervention and generating results, no results –in terms of outputs or outcomes of NDICI-funded interventions– can be reported so far. This time lag between financing and results is a structural feature that is common to any multiannual financial framework (MFF) cycle. Therefore, results data presented in chapter 3 of this report refers to results achieved from ongoing interventions, financed under the previous MFF.

Reporting on IPA III instrument

The IPA III instrument has introduced a set of requirements to monitor and report on progress towards its objectives throughout its implementation.

The IPA III Programming Framework is the overarching strategic document for the implementation of IPA III under the current MFF, replacing the former country-specific strategy papers. It focuses on the priorities of the enlargement process according to five thematic windows, which mirror the clusters of negotiating chapters as per the revised enlargement methodology. It also provides an indicative financial overview per window and programming year. Each thematic window, with a number of thematic priorities, incorporate indicators, including baselines, milestones and targets, to monitor implementation and achievement of objectives of the IPA III Programming Framework.

The IPA Performance Framework (IPA PF) is an additional tool, currently being updated, to meet monitoring and reporting requirements. Other existing results reporting, external monitoring reviews and evaluations to assess the extent to which specific objectives have been achieved complete the set of tools.

As 2021 is the first year of implementation of IPA III, the first operational results are only expected to materialise as of 2023, given the programming and implementation cycle. Similar to the NDICI-Global Europe as mentioned above, due to the inevitable time lag between financing an intervention and implementing the intervention and generating results, no results –in terms of outputs or outcomes of IPA III-funded interventions– can be reported so far. Therefore, results data presented in chapter 3 of this report again refers to results achieved from ongoing interventions, financed under the previous MFF.

5.1.2. Monitoring Systems and use of new IT platform

Over the course of the past years, the Commission has engaged substantially in designing tools and processes for results-based management of EU contributions in the field of external cooperation. This is to facilitate monitoring and results reporting processes and to respond to the growing need for data to capture the results of the implementation of EU external instruments. It is set in a wider transition, moving from a focus on inputs (mostly financial) to capturing the EU contribution in the field of external cooperation, an area where being able to measure the impact of actions on target populations is essential. As of today, various monitoring arrangements (internal and external) are in place focusing on different aspects of results-oriented monitoring such as implementation progress and achievement of objectives.

In 2021, the Commission reached significant milestones in the transition towards using the new IT platform OPSYS as a tool to capture results for corporate reporting and management. OPSYS creates a digital repository of EU-funded operations, and provides a central access to all stakeholders involved, both inside and outside the Commission. It will assume a pivotal role in ensuring that the Commission can deliver on the ambitious reporting obligations as set for the implementation of the NDICI-Global Europe and IPA III instruments in the years to come.

For the first time, the Commission services (EU Delegations and Headquarters) and all implementing partners will perform monitoring activities via the same tool, including direct reporting by implementing partners and Commission staff; and data aggregated for reporting at Headquarters, etc.

The Commission implemented a comprehensive outreach campaign to its staff as well as implementing partners to introduce the new concepts and features of the system, which supports reporting on results.

Since October 2021, the Commission engaged in the digitalisation of operational data on results from 7 000 EU-funded interventions. This process will last for the whole year 2022 and it will serve the purpose of encoding and storing the data necessary to report on results. This will eventually take place on a regular basis and feed annual corporate reporting requirements.

5.1.3. New reporting system on SDGs

At the end of 2018, the Working Party on Development Finance Statistics of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC WP-STAT), which oversees the official development assistance (ODA) reporting among DAC members, decided to start reporting on SDGs in ODA statistics.

The decision made before the end of 2018 to adjust reporting rules allowed reporters to have near - complete annual data sets by SDGs as of year 2019. Data quality of the SDG field has been steadily improving but remains a work in progress. A complete set of encoding and reporting guidelines should be made available during the course of 2022.

Targeted SDGs are recorded at commitment and payment level as per ODA reporting taxonomy. The transversal nature of SDGs is taken into account, as one single commitment is often connected to several SDGs (with the system allowing up to ten entries). To mitigate double-counting issues and to enhance the integrity of the measure, it is now mandatory to report one single main SDG and up to nine 'significant' SDGs for each project. With this system, the sum of financial flows related to the 'main' SDG will always equal the total amount of financial flows, but it is possible to report several

SDGs for one project by using the ‘significant’ SDG field, and therefore to visualise how many projects have been reported as being relevant to any given SDG, thereby providing an enhanced understanding of interlinkages between SDGs. 2021 is the first year to benefit from this new system.

The coverage of SDG reporting has improved since 2019 and will further improve in future reporting years. For year 2021, SDGs were reported for 99 % of commitments (up from 97 % in 2020) and 77 % of payments (up from 74 % in 2020). With the caveats mentioned above about methodological approaches under constant review and improvement, it is possible to trace all the projects, and aggregate the related volume of commitments, which contribute to the implementation of each individual SDG.

**Figure 8. Synthesis of the volume of commitments for each SDG
(As main SDG and significant SDG) in 2021**

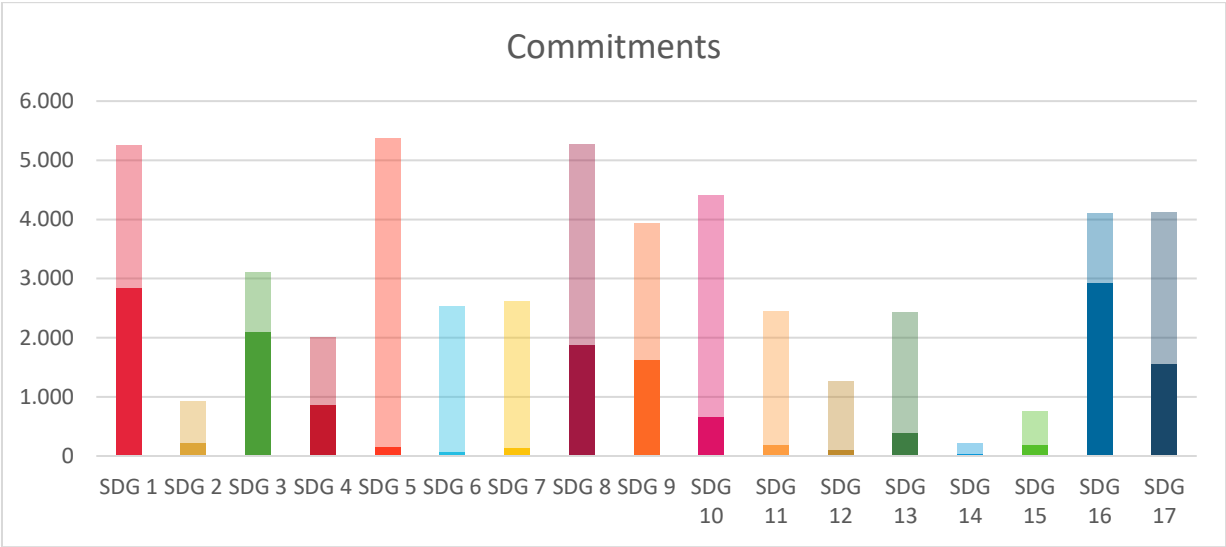


Table 6: Volume of commitments for each SDG (see Figure 8 above)

| SDG Description | Main SDG (million EUR) | Significant SDG (million EUR) |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions | 2 914 | 1 198 |
| SDG 01: No Poverty | 2 850 | 2 406 |
| SDG 03: Good Health and Well-being | 2 098 | 1 007 |
| SDG 08: Decent Work and Economic Growth | 1 918 | 3 345 |
| SDG 09: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | 1 624 | 2 313 |
| SDG 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal | 1 541 | 2 562 |
| SDG 04: Quality Education | 868 | 1 086 |
| SDG 10: Reduced Inequality | 557 | 3 849 |
| SDG 13: Climate Action | 373 | 2 057 |
| SDG 02: Zero Hunger | 212 | 716 |
| SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities | 179 | 2 271 |
| SDG 15: Life on Land | 174 | 579 |
| SDG 05: Gender Equality | 136 | 5 222 |
| SDG 07: Affordable and Clean Energy | 131 | 2 493 |

| SDG Description | Main SDG (million EUR) | Significant SDG (million EUR) |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production | 92 | 1 169 |
| SDG 06: Clean Water and Sanitation | 62 | 2 473 |
| SDG 14: Life Below Water | 19 | 202 |
| Total | 15 747 | 34 949 |

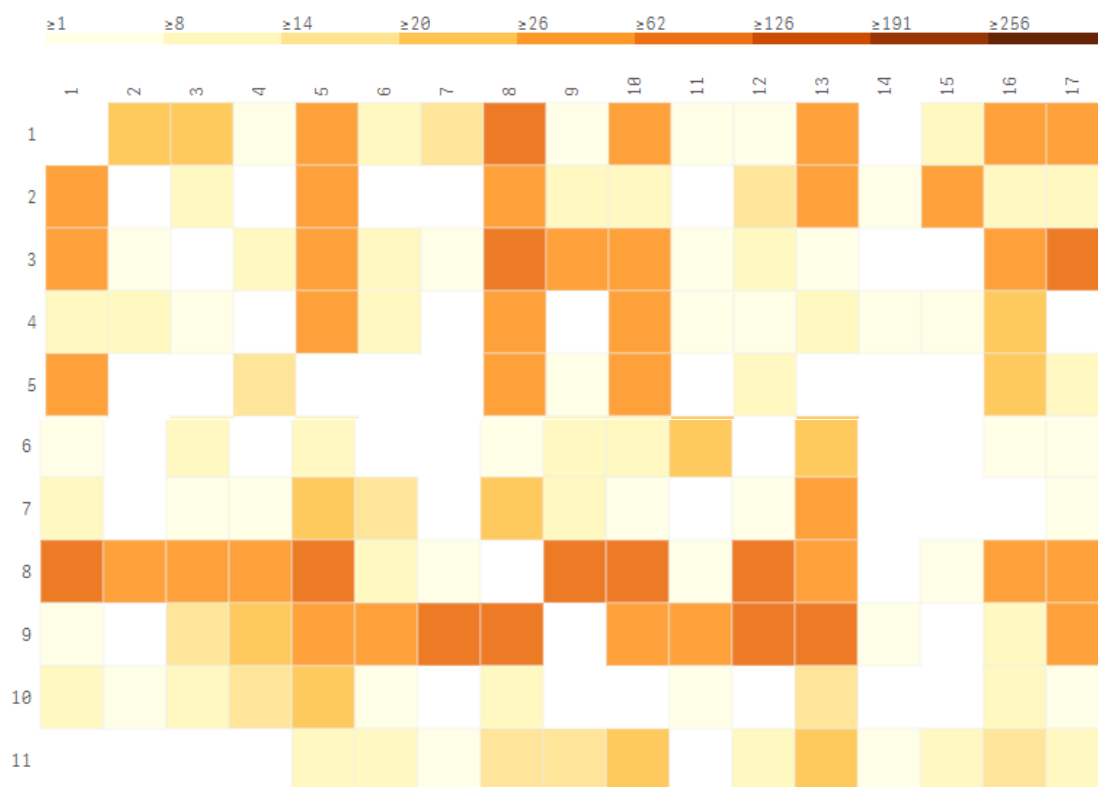
SDG 16, 1, 3, 8 and 9 are dominant as main SDGs. While SDGs 16, 1, 3 and 8 were already ranked high in previous years, SDG 9 is now significantly more targeted than during previous years. SDG 5, 10, 8 and 17, as well as the set of SDGs with a strong environmental component, are the most mentioned as significant SDGs, which confirms their cross-cutting nature.

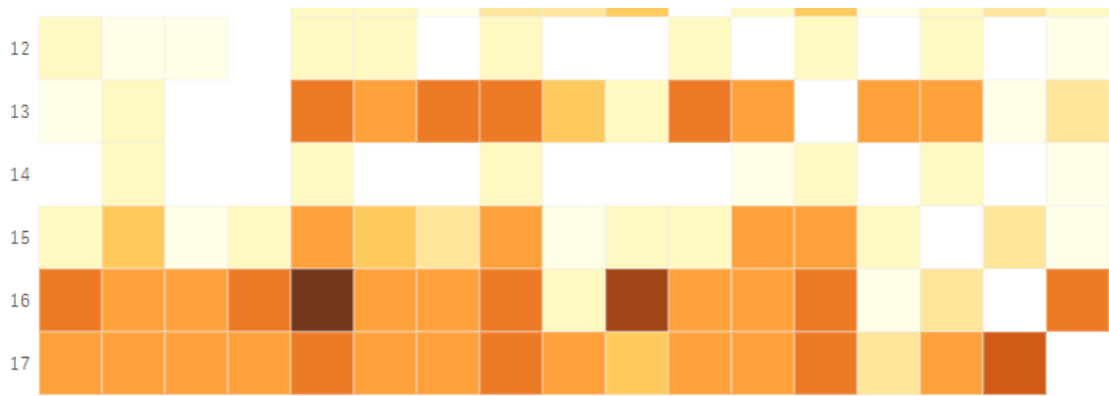
In order to be able to assess the interlinkages between SDGs, a table showing the relationship between main and significant SDGs has been created. As mentioned above, this highlights the overall strong cross-cutting nature of SDGs 5, 8 and 10, as well as the interaction with the set of SDGs with a strong environmental component. In addition, the table (illustrated by the graphic in Figure 9) shows, for each individual main SDG, which are the other SDGs most often associated through EU actions.

Figure 9. Interlinkages between SDGs (by number of projects) in 2021

Relationship between SDGs

The y-axis shows the Main SDG and is shown with its linked Significant SDGs on the x-axis. The colour indicates the number of times this connection occurs.

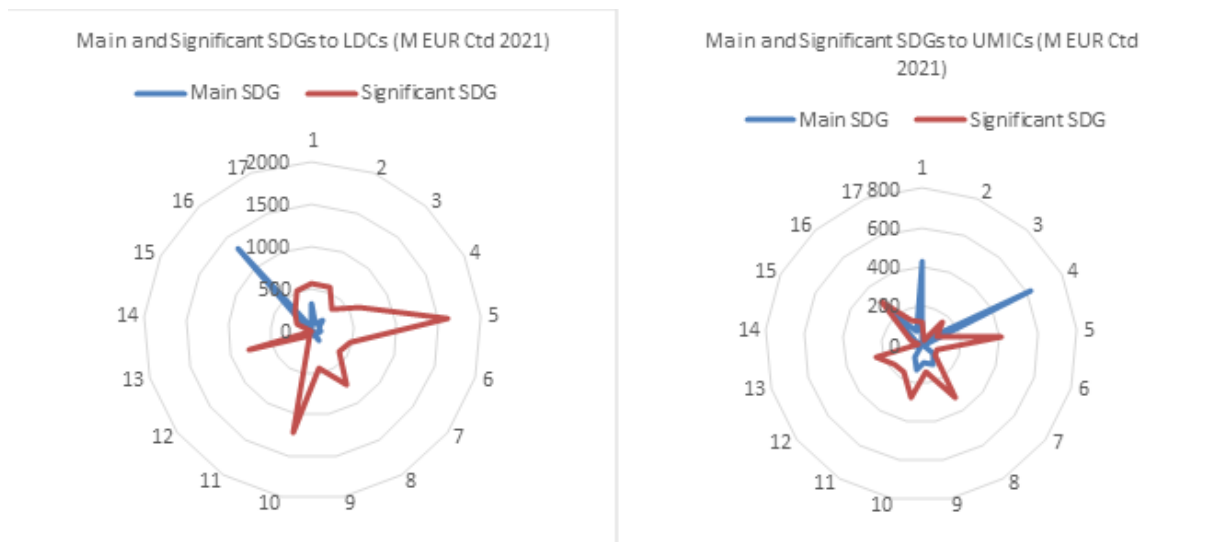




It is also possible to analyse targeted SDGs by the income group of countries, showing how EU priorities are implemented depending on country income level.

As an example, the two charts below (see Figure 10) show the SDG targeted by the European Commission in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Upper Middle-Income countries (UMICs) in 2021 (commitments). In the case of LDCs, SDGs 16 (Institutions, peace and justice) and 1 (Poverty reduction) logically dominate as main SDGs while more transversal SDGs such as 5 (Gender), 10 (Inequalities) and 13 (Climate) are marked as 'significant'. Targeted SDGs are more evenly spread in UMICs with a focus on poverty education and education as main SDGs, and a relatively even spread of significant SDGs.

Figure 10. Commitments by SDG to LDCs and UMICs in 2021 (million EUR)



The exercise of reporting on SDGs is at the end of its third year and is improving constantly. For the first time this year, the annual report incorporates a table on SDGs in the financial annexes and as of next year, it will be possible to further improve the analysis of the data, for example with an evolution of the targeting of SDGs during the MFF.

5.1.4. Evaluation: review of the work programme

Commission evaluation services are responsible for steering, coordination, monitoring and reporting on the evaluation function. They produce timely, high-quality evaluation results to ensure evidence is

available for informed decision-making and accountability. They carry out strategic evaluations, which can be geographic, thematic, sectoral or focused on specific financing instruments or budget support. They also monitor and support the evaluations carried out by other Commission departments that implement EU projects and programmes. In 2021, the Commission published eight strategic evaluations in the field of EU external and humanitarian action, comprising:

- Evaluation of the EU cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania (2014- 2020);
- Evaluation of the EU cooperation with the Central African Republic (2008- 2019);
- Evaluation of the EU's external action support in the area of migration assessing the EU's external action contribution in the policy area of migration in the period 2008-2018;
- Evaluation of the EU's cooperation with Serbia over the period 2012-2018;
- The evaluation of EU cooperation with Montenegro over the period 2012-2019;
- The mid-term evaluation of the IPA Cross Border Cooperation programme;
- Ex-post evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative (EUAV), 2014-2020; and
- The European Union's humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh (2017-2019).

As of December 2021, strategic evaluations were in progress for the following areas:

1. Sixteen thematic or partnership evaluations, including seven in the humanitarian sector:
 - a) European Union Support to Sustainable Agri-Food Systems between 2014 and 2020;
 - b) European Union support to Rule of Law and anticorruption in Partner Countries;
 - c) 'Collect More, Spend Better': PFM including domestic resource mobilisation and utilisation;
 - d) EU's cooperation with the World Bank 2014-2021;
 - e) EU's cooperation with the UN in external action;
 - f) EU's Initial Response to COVID-19 crisis in Partner Countries and Regions;
 - g) EU support to climate change and environment in neighbourhood and enlargement regions;
 - h) TAIEX;
 - i) Implementation of EU Blending in the EU Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans regions in 2015-2021;
 - j) Humanitarian access;
 - k) Disaster preparedness;
 - l) Humanitarian Food Safety;
 - m) Humanitarian Nutrition;
 - n) Humanitarian Response to Sudden Onset Disasters;
 - o) International Committee of the Red Cross; and
 - p) International Federation of the Red Cross.
2. Fifteen country or regional level evaluations, including four in the humanitarian sector on:
 - a) Angola;
 - b) Somalia;
 - c) Malawi;
 - d) Guatemala;
 - e) Papua New Guinea;

- f) Tajikistan;
- g) Moldova;
- h) North Macedonia;
- i) Iraq;
- j) Tunisia;
- k) Ukraine;
- l) Yemen;
- m) Turkey;
- n) Horn of Africa; and
- o) Sahel.

3. Two budget support evaluations on:

- a) Kyrgyzstan; and
- b) Morocco.

2021 was dominated by the transition from one multiannual framework to another which was reflected in a lower than usual number of evaluations. An evaluation of the Security Sector Governance Facility (IcSP/2020/422-305) was conducted and completed and an evaluation of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) Support to civil society organisations was launched but not completed in 2021.

5.1.5. Lessons learned

Some key lessons emerged from the evaluations of EU cooperation published in 2021.

Evaluation of the European Union (EU) cooperation with the Central African Republic (CAR) 2008-2019

The evaluation concluded that the EU strategy in the CAR had evolved during the evaluation period of 2008-2019 and responded in an adequate manner, considering the regional and international geopolitical context. The EU approach had a positive impact on the reconciliation and stabilisation process of the country through the effective application of the integrated approach. However, the frequent violation of the APPR¹²⁰ shows that the attempt to turn the military conflict between the Government and armed groups into a non-violent political conflict has not succeeded. The EU has succeeded in providing a relevant response to the needs of the population in terms of supporting the rehabilitation of basic services: water, health, and education. However, the EU's strategy for the resumption of the social contract has proved to be insufficiently sensitive to the conflict, thus limiting the achievement of objectives and putting a pressure on the sufficiency of the EU's approach to be addressed. The added value of the EU interventions in CAR is found in safeguarding and supporting the continuous functioning of the State, filling in the gaps. Although the EU support has contributed to rural resilience by strengthening the productive capital and rural organisations, it still achieves precarious results whereas the persisting security challenges can nullify the results at any time. Finally, the diversification of instruments has made it possible to reach the population better, highlighting a continuous need for sectoral restructuring and overall coherence. The Bêkou Trust Fund has made it possible to adapt assistance to the co-existing emergency and development needs

¹²⁰ Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR) signed in Bangui on 6 February 2019 by the Government and 14 armed groups.

by responding to them. Despite contributions to the Bêkou Fund, the involvement of Member States (France, The Netherlands, Italy and Germany) and also Switzerland was insufficient at strategic level (Nexus) and remained formal.

Evaluation of the European Union (EU) cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Mauritania 2014-2020

The evaluation concluded that the EU approach, covering broad sectors (governance, inclusive and sustainable growth), has played a key role in the formulation and implementation of national sectoral strategies as well as in the development of the country, however, the regional dimension has only been partially addressed. The EU strategy has not followed a clear single strategic framework, and the focus on the institutional dimension, has revealed its limitations. The implementation has been confronted by significant issues of partnership and ownership. The absence of real national supervision and the lack of participation of non-traditional donors have undermined the national coordination. The EU has succeeded in improving governance and the rule of law, the protection of human rights, the emergence of credible civil society actors and the reform of public finances. The healthcare sector governance and the equitable accessibility to essential healthcare services in a sustainable manner have improved, responding to the new pandemic situation. The effects of the EU support on the security dynamics of the sub-region are not very visible at this stage with the projects, at the national level, primarily targeting prevention. The EU has contributed to the country's dynamic in terms of inclusive growth, against a backdrop of climatic hazards, institutional weaknesses, and regional insecurity but the effects are mainly modest and felt at the local level. The management of migration was conducive in terms of security, however, the results on economic potentialities and the protection of migrants' rights are still limited. Exchanges and synergies with the Member States were regular, but have gradually become implementing partners for the EU, reducing their country cooperation.

Evaluation of the EU's external action support in the area of migration

The evaluation assessed the EU's external action contribution in the policy area of migration in the period 2008-2018, in particular in the areas of labour legal migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings in Enlargement, Neighbourhood, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia (Central and South) regions. The evaluation concluded that over the period reviewed, the EU developed an increasingly comprehensive approach to migration, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings (not strictly speaking, a migration issue, but closely related). The EU's Development and Enlargement policies, which themselves evolved over the reference period, offered a solid foundation for implementing the EU's external policy agenda. The range of financing instruments, modalities, and channels available is impressive (if sometimes confusing to outsiders). Yet, despite some progress, the EU has found it challenging to deliver results in the three areas here covered – legal (labour) migration (especially), smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings – that are in line with its aspirations.

Strategic, country-level evaluation of the EU's cooperation with Serbia over the period 2012-2018

The findings of the evaluation confirm the EU's clear and positive contribution to reform in Serbia and highlight areas of good practice which could be modelled in other sectors or countries to good effect. The report also identifies areas in which EU cooperation could be strengthened to improve the effectiveness and the accountability of its cooperation. For example, more attention could be given to the underlying logic of how goals will be achieved to enhance effectiveness of programming.

In addition, system-wide interventions are more likely to contribute to greater impact and sustainability. In this regard, investing in the ability of the national authorities to manage institutional change itself is critical for sustainability, while accountability mechanisms were vital elements of more successful interventions.

Evaluation of EU cooperation with Montenegro

The evaluation concluded that there is widespread appreciation and recognition of the role of the EU in supporting Montenegro's path towards accession. The trident of accession framework, policy dialogue and financial assistance has combined to produce an unusually influential and supportive mechanism for encouraging national reforms and investment. Policy dialogue within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, as well as the Economic Reform programme, are a vital contribution to policy development in Montenegro. Dialogue brings evidence-based analysis of progress towards EU membership and builds appreciation of policy options available. The Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) financial assistance, together with accompanying technical assistance can provide practical means to realise policy goals. There are, however, a number of areas where challenges remain and where there are opportunities for increasing the overall effectiveness and impact of EU cooperation. Some of these include: IPA process and design of assistance, Montenegro's institutional arrangements as well as monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts.

Evaluation of the IPA Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) programme

Key lessons learnt identified by the evaluation include the following elements: (i) The IPA CBC Is designed and implemented under a largely common approach in very differing local contexts, which needs a broader range of tools if it is to be effective in addressing challenges in the border regions; (ii) There are too many indicators and a recognised need to simplify indicators and develop common indicators; (iii) Changing the role of the Joint Technical Secretariat to remove them from the procurement process has enabled them to more readily engage with local stakeholders, although it does risk removing all local knowledge from grantee selection; (iv) The use of NGOs and consultants to support implementation is a practical first step but is expensive and limits the amount of funding that flows through to end beneficiaries; (v) Small scale infrastructure can be an effective tool in complementing administrative capacity building but larger infrastructure needs to be connected to addressing a clear cross border challenge and to be connected to broader regional development strategies; (vi) The development of truly joint operations that address cross border challenges rather than just addressing development issues in the border regions is a lengthy and complicated process that is best addressed by strategic projects; (vii) Placing a greater focus on sustainability in the grant evaluation process is needed to address the reliance on ongoing donors support for most interventions; and (viii) Collaboration and coordination at a IPA CBC level between individual IPA CBC programmes enables the exchange of best practice and builds collaboration.

Ex-post evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative, 2014-2020

The ex-post evaluation of the EU Aid Volunteers Initiative (EUAV) covers the period 2014-2020. After a delayed start-up, the Initiative contributed to the capacity of the EU to deliver humanitarian aid, although on a limited scale and mostly short-term, by increasing participant organisations' capacities, harmonising standards, enabling new partnerships and the deployment of well-trained volunteers. The Initiative was not sufficiently integrated into the humanitarian aid and development work of the EU, and it was less effective in promoting EU humanitarian principles. By 2019, only 62 % of the EUR 115 million initial EUAV budget had been committed. Heavy administrative processes and procedural

requirements initially hampered implementation. The management of the Initiative was however cost-effective overall. The security management system ensured volunteer security and limited EU reputational risk. However, it substantially reduced volunteer access to humanitarian settings. The Initiative was designed to improve EU volunteering through a holistic approach, but it lacked clarity on the role of volunteering in humanitarian contexts and on the hierarchy of the objectives pursued. Recommendations suggest clarifying the relationship between design and objectives, revisiting the security management system, strengthening localisation, facilitating learning, reinforcing communications and interagency coordination, and developing a 'toolkit' addressing the specific needs of partners and volunteers.

[Evaluation of the European Union's humanitarian response to the Rohingya refugee crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh \(2017-2019\)](#)

The evaluation concluded that Commission humanitarian aid services have, despite a budget that was not proportionate to the needs, contributed to meeting objectives of preventing and alleviating human suffering, maintaining human dignity and upholding humanitarian principles. This also encompassed a key role in terms of coordination and advocacy. As a large-scale dignified return for the Rohingya is unlikely in the foreseeable future, further development of a joint strategic approach has become even more pressing. Strategic recommendations targeted EU actions in Myanmar and Bangladesh were: (i) Develop a multi-year strategy aligned with the nexus joint response plan; (ii) Continue innovative approaches at both a country and global level to promote localisation; (iii) Refine advocacy strategies to promote changes in policy environments; and (iv) Promote consistent attention to cost effectiveness by partners. A recommendation for Commission humanitarian services is to ensure timely and adequate funding to maintain the EU's position as a key facilitator and influencer in the response.

[Evaluation of the EU's implementation of the DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document "Gender: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance" of July 2013, \(2014-2018\)](#)

The evaluation finds that the implementation of a gender policy framework has improved gender integration in operations. Targeted actions have significantly increased but overlooked some vulnerabilities. Funding of global capacity building by Enhanced Response Capacity was effective. The DG ECHO gender policy framework is in appropriate coherence with relevant policies at EU and global levels, and the EU leadership of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies provided significant added value to the initiative. Dialogue with partners about gender is appreciated but not systematic; the Gender-Age Marker's rating process is still often a 'box ticking' process. Implementation is supported by Commission experts but knowledge of e-training opportunities is limited among the larger staff population as well as local implementing partners. Gender issues could be further integrated among the Commission's nexus priorities. Recommendations include more training on the Marker, adaptation of targeted actions, and increased advocacy on issues of importance, such as intersectionality, within the nexus.

[Evaluation of European Union's humanitarian assistance in Syria \(2016-2018\)](#)

The evaluation concludes that the Commission services have made a unique contribution to strengthening the humanitarian footprint across the country and improving coverage of response in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. The response was in strong alignment with humanitarian principles, and well-coordinated with other humanitarian actors. Commission assistance has played a significant part in the delivery of food, non-food items, water and shelter to the population in need.

The cash-based interventions have enabled communities to prioritise their own essential needs. Its support has also enabled primary healthcare providers to continue to function and deliver healthcare. Overall, the Commission played a lead role in donor coordination on the Syria response, acting as a bridge between partners and donors, and individual EU Member States rely heavily on its presence on the ground.

Evaluation of the Security Sector Governance Facility

The evaluation of the Security Sector Governance Facility found the project highly relevant to EU policies and IcSP priorities, flexible and of high technical quality. The evaluation also pointed out the good synergy with EEAS and Commission services, both at Headquarters and field levels. In addition to the direct benefits of the project activities, the evaluators also pointed to the impact of the Facility to enhance the profile of the EU as a credible partner on security. In terms of improvements, the evaluators recommended limiting the scope of potential interventions – ‘[w]hile assignments should continue to ensure ownership of security initiatives by beneficiaries, they should be more aligned with EU peace and security priorities and should receive strong support from EUDs’. Furthermore, they recommended that each assignment include dedicated components on human rights and an increased involvement of local security experts to ensure buy-in and sustainability of the support provided.

5.2. Aid delivery modalities

5.2.1. Budget Support

Budget support was instrumental in helping countries and OCTs in their response to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and in their recovery efforts, in coordination with EU Member States (in a ‘Team Europe’ approach). This is evidenced by the external evaluation of the EU COVID response in 2020, which concluded that budget support can be powerful to support partner governments facing a rapid onset crisis in quickly providing funds to frontline public services.

In 2021, EU budget support continued offering additional fiscal space to partner countries to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic with EUR 1.18 billion of payments in support of their policies and the COVID-19 response in particular. This support was not as massive as in 2020 (EUR 3 billion of budget support) and was closer to the yearly average witnessed between 2014 and 2019 of around EUR 1.5 billion.

The effort made to frontload resources in 2020 as the crisis hit could not be fully offset in 2021, as the new Global Europe instrument entered into force and the formulation of new operations started within that new framework. The persistence of political blockages and the rise of new crises hindering cooperation with governments and putting on hold budget support programmes exacerbated this trend, for instance in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mali and Myanmar.



Namibia – Early childhood development and education
EU budget support contributed to the provision of integrated early childhood development service delivery, particularly for vulnerable communities. It focused on personal protective equipment for COVID-19, learning materials and feeding supplements, and ensured learning continuity and safety for young children in poor areas during the 2021 lockdown. A

communication campaign promoted respect for children with disabilities.

EU budget support continued to cover a large variety of sectors, with payments in 59 partner countries or OCTs. In 2021, budget support payments accounted for 11.5 % of the payments by the Commission within the framework of the Global Europe instrument or under predecessor instruments. Sector reform performance contracts remained the most used type of budget support with about three-quarters of the portfolio, followed by State and Resilience Building Contracts and SDG Contracts, both general budget support, making up the other quarter.

Nepal – Reducing disaster risk for education



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In Nepal, EU budget support contributed to building back school infrastructure damaged in the 2015 earthquake. It focused on the safe reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of schools in both earthquake-affected and non-affected areas. Since 2016, EU budget support has contributed to upgrading more than 4 300 educational institutions in the 14 most earthquake affected districts. Nearly 350 classrooms in non-earthquake affected districts were also retrofitted.

Sector reform performance contracts (SRPCs) are implemented in all sectors covered by the SDGs, of which the largest are education (see Namibia and Nepal case studies), agriculture and health. SRPCs remain instrumental in helping stabilise post-conflict, post-disaster and fragile situations. They support the achievement of SDGs by targeting countries' vital state functions, building up resilience and helping deliver basic services to populations. They were particularly useful to help with the pandemic consequences. The other type of general budget support, the SDG Contract, is implemented in more stable contexts. It offers a platform to address several SDGs for a national reform agenda around multifaceted priorities, such as youth (Senegal) or sustainable and inclusive development (see Cabo Verde case study).

Eradicating extreme poverty in Cabo Verde



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In 2021, EU budget support provided urgently needed financial support. This payment helped fund essential social and economic measures, as the COVID-19 crisis dramatically undermined the development trajectory of this highly indebted and tourism-dependent archipelago. In 2020, extreme poverty was still affecting 13.2 % of the population. This programme will support Cabo Verde in achieving its goal to eradicate extreme poverty by 2026. It will also promote greener economic development and gender equality.

As a performance-based tool, the results of a country's policies are the core of budget support operations. The first incentive for results lies in the four criteria which condition the provision of budget support: (i) A relevant and credible public policy for national development or sector reforms;

(ii) Stability-oriented macroeconomic policies; (iii) Progress in public finance management and revenue mobilisation; and (iv) Budget transparency and oversight. Results are further incentivised by performance tranches whose amounts vary proportionally to the achievement of specific targets drawn from countries' policies. In all programmes, gender equality is promoted, notably through dedicated targets identified within the set of indicators of the supported reform plan. Budget support's contribution to countries' results is evaluated regularly (see evaluations for Morocco and Kyrgyzstan for examples).

98 000 hectares reforested in Morocco with EU support



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The EU budget support programme on sustainable forest management contributed to a paradigm change in the Moroccan forest policy, shifting from a prohibitive approach to sustainable and participatory management. It helped bring the legal framework on forest management and protected areas in line with international standards.

With the contribution of the EU budget support, 12 new sites over an area of 41 000 hectares were designated as wetlands of international importance and five national parks now meet international standards. Moreover, the EU budget support programme contributed to the reforestation of 98 000 hectares and to the increase of officially registered forest areas to 6.37 million hectares. This has also led to a reduction in land disputes in four priority provinces of the country.

In line with the European Green Deal, budget support is increasingly called on to support climate action, environment protection and biodiversity. The dialogue performed with countries' authorities and stakeholders mainstreams this global priority in all policies. Budget support also promotes sustainable finance tools, green public procurement/investment and green taxation.

Local development and biodiversity in Colombia to support peace



EU budget support addresses socio-economic challenges in regions previously affected by armed conflict. It promotes conservation and sustainable management agreements between the authorities and the rural communities in protected areas. It supported economic development and the reduction of both geographical and gender disparities.

Between 2016 and 2021, it contributed to the rehabilitation and/or recovery of nearly 28 000 hectares of forest. More than 300 local green businesses and 4 500 indigenous, peasant and vulnerable families benefited from EU support. This success encouraged the Colombian environment ministry to increase its financial support to national parks.

The improvement of the business environment and investment climate is a priority for EU budget support in parallel with the European Fund for Sustainable Development + and the Global Gateway

initiative. This helps countries recover from the crisis, meet their infrastructure needs and stimulate private sector development. Scaling up public and private investment is conditional upon a conducive policy and regulatory framework, human development, economic governance and public administration reform, on which the EU puts emphasis in the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood.



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Better services to Ukrainians through public administration reform

From 2017 to 2021, the EU supported better services, digitalisation, and decentralisation in Ukraine. Ukraine significantly improved access to administrative services and their quality. Over 120 such services were made digitally available, increasingly through a single online gateway and a mobile application with over 10 million users. It allowed the delivery of paperless services and reduced the time that citizens and business spent on administrative processes. The EU assisted in developing a network of nearly 1 000 administrative service centres – one-stop-shops all over Ukraine. From 2020 to 2022, more than 100 000 families with new-borns benefited from the e-baby service, bringing together ten previously separate services for childbirth including civil registration. The EU supported the development of a more professional civil service. A single online gateway for all vacancy announcements has handled over 80 000 applications to date. New merit-based selection methods were introduced, including for senior management positions in ministries and state institutions.

Reforms are essential to foster a better climate for private investors, including for EU companies, and to secure shared and sustainable returns on investment. In addition, in coordination with the IMF, budget support includes a strong focus on macroeconomic stability, another key component of the investment climate and a constraining factor in scaling up investment in the light of the global debt crisis.

5.2.2. Blending

To finance the SDGs and respond to an increasingly complex world, development finance needs to rely on a combination of funding sources. To increase the impact of ODA, public and private funds must be leveraged as efficiently as possible. The EU must be ready to adapt and further develop its financial instruments and policy tools for investments outside the EU if it is to deliver on its ambitious commitments to sustainable development.

In this context, through blending the EU uses limited amounts of public grants to mobilise financing from partner financial institutions, like international development banks and the private sector, for projects that will do most to help countries develop. The strategic use of a limited grant element can support projects with low financial return but a high economic (i.e. societal) return. Blending projects aim to achieve sustainable growth and reduce poverty.

The EU Blending Framework currently comprises seven active regional blending facilities¹²¹ - The Africa Investment Platform (AIP), Asia Investment Facility (AIF), Caribbean Investment Facility (CIF),

¹²¹ The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), the regional blending facility in the Western Balkans, is covered in the Chapter on Enlargement. Additional information can also be found in: www.wbif.eu/

Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA), Investment Facility for the Pacific (IFP), Latin American Investment Facility (LAIF), and Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP) - and covers all regions of EU external cooperation. The EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund had allocated all its remaining resources in 2019. These facilities comprise the blending instruments of the European Fund for Sustainable Development+ (EFSD+). From the creation of the first blending facilities in 2007, more than EUR 8.6 billion of EU grants are estimated to have leveraged over EUR 74 billion of loans by financial institutions and regional development banks for a total investment volume of more than EUR 132 billion.

The amounts approved in 2021 are presented in the Table below.

Table 7: EU Blending contributions approved in 2021

| Blending facilities | 2021 (million EUR – not including fees) |
|---------------------|---|
| NIP | 252.97 |
| AIP | 159.57 |
| ITF | - |
| LAIF | 36.46 |
| Thematic | 143.85 |
| IFCA | 6.77 |
| AIF | 36.40 |
| CIF | 4.87 |
| IFP | - |
| Total | 640.89 |

In addition, in 2017 the European Commission developed the External Investment Plan (EIP), a new EU initiative offering an innovative way to attract more investment, in particular from businesses and private investors, to countries in Africa and the EU Neighbourhood. At the core of the EIP, the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) combines a new guarantee instrument with two regional investment platforms - the Africa Investment Platform (AIP) and the Neighbourhood Investment Platform, NIP.

The EFSD has approved guarantees and blending investments in approximately 237 projects in Sub-Saharan Africa and the EU Neighbourhood, with an EU contribution exceeding EUR 5.7 billion to date. This financing is expected to mobilise over EUR 55 billion of investments in financial inclusion and support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as in renewable energy, energy efficiency, irrigation, water and wastewater management, agriculture, transport, cities and digital sectors, and social and education sectors.

Both within the EFSD framework and the other Regional Facilities, investments in the year 2020 and in 2021 were reoriented to support the EU global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences. Several projects provided support to the health sector, while others focused on providing finance to sectors and entrepreneurs most likely to be affected by the crisis. This included sectors such as MSMEs and entrepreneurs such as women, young people and other marginalised groups. As mentioned above, the EFSD is now being supplemented by its successor, the EFSD+, and bringing these implementing modalities to all regions under the Global Europe heading.

5.2.3. EFSD+, EU budget Guarantees

The European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) and its successor EFSD+ aim to bridge the gap between the financing already available in 2017, when the EFSD was created, and the substantial amount of financing required to create jobs and boost growth to meet the UNs' SDGs by 2030. They address the financing gap through blending operations worldwide, with grants, technical assistance, financial instruments and budgetary guarantees, according to the best-adapted mix for each financing situation. The EFSD and the EFSD+ are powerful de-risking tools, constituting the most extensive public blending and guarantee programmes in support of private sector investment for development.

Sixteen guarantee agreements have been signed between 2017 and 2021 for approximately EUR 1.75 billion¹²², with the expectation that they will facilitate investments upwards of EUR 11 billion. Other guarantees, carried over from the EFSD, are currently under discussion to be financed under the EFSD+. They cover a variety of fields including renewable energy, new technologies such as fintech and agritech, MSME support and access to finance, municipal infrastructure, transport and logistics, foreign exchange markets, and access to credits for rural/agricultural activities. Under the EFSD, partnerships have been established with more than ten different financial institutions, ranging from international powerhouses such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC from IFC/WB Group), to European national development banks and agencies such as AECID (the Spanish development agency), AFD (the French development agency), CDP (the Italian development bank), COFIDES (the Spanish development bank), FMO (the Dutch development bank), KfW (the German development bank), and PROPARCO (the French development bank). Under the EFSD+, the Commission expects to work not only with these partners but also to add several additional financial institutions that have been approved to manage EU funds under blending and/or budgetary guarantees.

Under the EFSD, only the European Neighbourhood and the Sub-Saharan Africa regions were eligible for support under the budgetary guarantee component. Under the EFSD+, budgetary guarantees are now applicable to all the regions covered by the IPA III and NDICI-Global Europe instruments, just like the blending platforms. Under these two instruments, not only the geographic applicability of the support can be targeted; but also, the final beneficiaries of the loans extended by the partner financial institutions can be specified in the agreements, for example targeting youth, women, migrants, and more. The EFSD+ is organised into investment windows corresponding to priority areas of activity for investment.

This new budgetary guarantee tool has played an important role in the EU's global response to COVID-19. In 2021, a guarantee of EUR 200 million was extended to cover the EIB's COVAX II loan to the GAVI Alliance, the second of its kind. This was essentially a top-up to the transaction structure of the Vaccine Component under the European Health Platform undertaken in 2020. It is expected to ensure equitable access globally by supporting low-income and lower-middle-income countries' efforts to procure vaccines.

¹²² Including the COVAX guarantee agreement, which is mentioned further below, the only one signed in 2021 and financed under the EFSD+, since this latest agreement is considered to be a top-up of a previous EFSD agreement.

Most of the sixteen guarantees agreements mentioned are accompanied by technical assistance contracts, to facilitate and strengthen the roll-out of the guaranteed operations. To date, technical assistance contracts linked to guarantees add up to EUR 117 million, of which EUR 24 million have been contracted in 2021.

5.2.4. Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) refers to the personnel involved in the implementation and the management of technical cooperation services. Technical Cooperation (TC) is associated with actions aimed at strengthening individual and organisational capacity by providing expertise (short- and long-term TA personnel, institutional twinning arrangements, and mobilisation of Diaspora, etc.), training and related learning opportunities (peer exchange, tertiary education, etc.), and equipment.

In the framework adopted under NDICI-Global Europe the EU has undertaken significant efforts to use more Member States' public sector expertise to provide technical assistance to partner countries. The public sector expertise has been recognised as a form of international technical cooperation that mobilises expertise from all EU Member States' public institutions. It promotes reform and sustainable and inclusive development policies through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange and institutional partnerships with partner countries to support the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

Support provided by EU Member States' public institutions creates mutual trust between the EU and partner countries' public servants and institutions, helps promote European values and interests as well as European standards and the policy approaches that are necessary for enhancing strategic partnerships. More importantly, it has proved to be a flexible, efficient and cost-effective way to build capacities.

It is also well-suited for the 'Team Europe' approach as all interested Member States, including smaller ones and those without a presence in partner countries, could be involved in the planning and implementation of interventions in EU external action activities.

The Commission and the Practitioners' Network have developed a joint action plan on mobilisation of European public sector expertise in international development cooperation 2021¹²³ and presented it to the Council of the European Union. This resulted into the adoption of the Council Conclusions¹²⁴ calling for a renewed push to improve coordination, synergies and learning between the EU and Member States on how European public sector expertise can be mobilised in support of policy dialogue and Team Europe initiatives.

5.2.5. Twinning and TAIEX

The geographic extension of the Institution Building instruments TAIEX and Twinning to developing countries and territories was continued in 2021, the second year of the pilot phase. TAIEX and Twinning INTPA mobilise EU Member States' public expertise to support partner countries within the context of the Agenda 2030 and in achieving the SDGs.

Although COVID-19 influenced the pace of implementation, flexible arrangements for Twinning and a shift to virtual and hybrid activities for TAIEX proved effective in taking forward these technical

¹²³ [European Development Cooperation PDF Publications Database \(dev-practitioners.eu\)](#)

¹²⁴ [EU public sector expertise: a key asset at the service of EU's partner countries - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

cooperation tools. TAIEX INTPA expanded to ten new beneficiary countries in 2021. Furthermore, a series of TAIEX INTPA events in the Dominican Republic (judiciary), Uganda (food security) and Uzbekistan (justice) have all triggered interest in continuing peer-to-peer cooperation through Twinning initiatives. 22 TAIEX INTPA activities were implemented through all geographic regions in wide ranging policy areas from e-governance, anti-corruption, sustainable finance to sanitary-phytosanitary.

In 2021, implementation of four Twinning projects started in Zambia (anticorruption and audit), Kyrgyzstan (digitalisation), and Namibia (standards); four additional projects were prepared for launch in early 2022 in the Dominican Republic (judiciary), Madagascar (SPS), Rwanda (vaccine manufacturing) and in Uzbekistan (justice).

Beneficiary institutions of the pioneering Twinning projects in Zambia appreciate the capacity building focus of the tool and the opportunity to learn from the European approach to public administration reform. This form of cooperation between peers in the public sector has the potential to create trust and build long-term institutional partnerships in other interested countries, including Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda.

5.3. Improving ways of working

5.3.1. Simplification of procedures

Legislative Framework

Under the multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, a single instrument (the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe – NDICI-Global Europe)¹²⁵ integrates most external financing instruments that existed as separate basic acts under the former multiannual financial framework, including the 11th European Development Fund (EDF). As a result, alongside NDICI-Global Europe, the Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland (DOAG)¹²⁶, the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC)¹²⁷ and the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III)¹²⁸ constitute the financing instruments for external action under the new multiannual financial framework.

The aim of merging these previously existing external financing instruments into one single instrument is to achieve simplification in an area that was characterised by a multitude of diverging provisions. Furthermore, the DOAG and IPA III build upon cross-references to the NDICI-Global Europe, thereby harmonising the implementation provisions. Moreover, the integration into NDICI-

¹²⁵ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/947 of 9 June 2021](#) establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1).

¹²⁶ [Council Decision 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021](#) on the association of the Overseas countries and territories (OCTs) with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland (OJ L 355, 7.10.2021, p. 6).

¹²⁷ [Council Regulation 2021/948 of 27 May 2021](#) establishing a European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation complementing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe on the basis of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, and repealing Regulation (Euratom) No 237/2014 (OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 79).

¹²⁸ [Regulation 2021/1529 of 15 September 2021](#) establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III) (OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p. 1).

Global Europe of the cooperation previously funded by the extra-budgetary EDF results in one single set of rules applicable to all external actions. In line with this, the new Partnership Agreement with the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)¹²⁹ will no longer include a Financial Protocol, nor technical provisions laying down specific implementation and management procedures for cooperation with OACP States.

Direct Management

The main novelty in 2021 was the introduction of the concept of eSubmission for international open, restricted and negotiated procurement procedures. This allows economic operators to respond electronically to procurement procedures by preparing submissions (i.e., requests to participate or tenders) and submitting them electronically in a faster and more secure way. eSubmission will take place through the Funding & Tenders Portal which will become the platform for Economic Operators to participate in procurement procedures. For procedures managed by partner countries as well as simplified and local open procedures, hard copy submission will still be applicable.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, actions have been taken for further digitalisation, facilitating remote working conditions. Since 2020, depending on the COVID-19 situation, scanned invoices and electronic copies of tenders and proposals have been accepted and, in 2021, the decision was taken that those documents do not need to be regularised.

As for the further streamlining of pre-award procedures and procurement, the main priority is to progressively complete eProcurement and eGrants developments, which will become the contract management tools enabling paperless contract management. In the long run, they will replace the current legacy system CRIS.

Indirect Management

In 2021, important milestones were reached in the negotiations concerning new or updated Financial Framework Partnership Agreements, which simplify discussions on substantive actions by framing rights and obligations in advance.

In order to ensure swift contracting, the possibility to conclude contribution agreements and contribution agreements for Financial Instruments (CAFIs) by using Qualified Electronic Signature has been introduced.

In 2021, following the adoption of Commission Decision¹³⁰ that establishes the framework for the acceptance of simplified forms of funding, several partners have submitted requests to initiate the corresponding process. Furthermore, Commission services also proposed, in 2021, a procedure for

¹²⁹ In December 2020, the negotiators reached political agreement on a new broad agreement. In order to provide for the completion of the procedures for entry into force of the new EU-OACPS Partnership Agreement, the application of ACP-EU Partnership Agreement is further extended until 30 June 2022, unless the new Partnership Agreement enters into force or is provisionally applied before that date (Decision No 3/2021 of the ACP-EU Committee of Ambassadors of 26 November 2021 to amend Decision No 3/2019 of the ACP EU Committee of Ambassadors to adopt transitional measures pursuant to Article 95(4) of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (OJ L 441, 9.12.2021, p. 3).).

¹³⁰ Commission Decision C(2020)5790 of 7 September 2020 authorising the use of lump sums, unit costs and flat-rate financing (simplified cost options) of an entity entrusted with the implementation of Union funds under indirect management or through grants awarded outside a call for proposals to such entities.

the acceptance of cost accounting practices already accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes, in line with Article 185.3 of the Financial Regulation¹³¹.

5.4. Communication & transparency

5.4.1. Communication

In 2021, Commission services continued to work closely together and with the EEAS and EU Delegations/Offices to improve external and strategic communication and to tackle false narratives on the EU's international partnerships, enlargement and neighbourhood policies. Information and communication activities addressed audiences both in the partner regions and in the EU.

With the entry into force of the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2021-2027, a new approach to EU communication and visibility also became the norm, with an impact on all outreach activities in the field of external action.

Communication activities were implemented around the key policy events in the Western Balkans, notably social media campaigns and packages of communication products around the Berlin Process Summit, the EU-WB Brdo Summit and the annual Enlargement Package. Other outreach events included the Roma Awards and the TAIEX 25th Anniversary event, which also included a high-profile social media visibility campaign leading up to the event.

Under the EU regional communication programme for the Western Balkans, main activities included the ongoing development of the web portal WeBalkans.eu, the second large-scale integrated regional communication campaign focusing on the EU economic and investment plan reaching 7 million people via TV and radio, 4.5 million via outdoor advertising, and a further aggregated reach of 37 million through the paid digital campaign, as well as the expansion of the Young European Ambassadors Network, now numbering 120 young people from across the region.

Activities implemented within the EU Neighbours Regional Communication programmes in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood ('EU Neighbours East' and 'EU Neighbours South') included thematic online campaigns (e.g., with influencers in the South and Young European Ambassadors in the East) and virtual outreach events (e.g., campus tours, webinars, and media briefings). The web portal for EU Neighbours East was fully revamped in 2021. Due to the continued COVID-19 pandemic, all activities had to remain fully online throughout the entire year.

The outreach and engagement rates on social media channels across the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions increased significantly throughout 2021, showing that the social media strategy is successful. On Facebook, the number of followers increased by 43 045 compared to 2020, reaching 609 728 followers and making it the third highest Commission account. On Twitter the total number of followers increased by 21 920, reaching 132 903 followers, and the number of followers on Instagram grew to 27 118.

Throughout another year of COVID-19 restrictions, the Commission continued to strengthen its strategic communication and outreach of the EU on its external action, with a particular focus on

¹³¹ [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

digital activities. The Commission developed an integrated approach to strategic communication and public diplomacy, pursued its large-scale campaign #WhatDoYouSee? in Africa with plans to expand to other regions, and reached a wider audience through key digital events such as the Lorenzo Natali Prize, the Kapuscinski Development Lectures and our SDG-themed campaign #2030IsNow.

With the entry into force of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, the Commission and the EEAS worked in close collaboration to design and implement a joined-up approach to strategic communication and public diplomacy for activities funded under NDICI-Global Europe at country, regional and global levels. Strategic communication and public diplomacy activities will be designed to ensure that awareness, understanding and perception of the EU's contribution to country-level outcomes is commensurate with the scale, scope and ambition of the EU's engagement among clearly defined target audiences. This new approach to EU communication and visibility aims to ensure a more coherent 'one-EU' vision and voice in partner countries, focusing communication and outreach efforts on the EU's values, interests, priorities and impact in the country, region and world.

The Commission further demonstrated the EU's position in the world on key political priorities such as the support to vaccination in partner countries, the Finance for Africa Summit, our cooperation with the FAO on food security, COP26, the adoption of NDICI-Global Europe and the launch of the EU Global Gateway strategy. In addition, the 'Team Europe' approach was illustrated through flagship initiatives, developed and identified in close coordination with EU Member States at capital and country levels.

Commission services social media presence for international partnerships was key in another year where offline activities were limited and the reach of the Commission's @EU_Partnerships accounts increased significantly, with close to 125 000 more followers across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Activities on Facebook and Instagram specifically targeted young audiences both inside and outside the EU; communication on Twitter targeted policymakers and development experts and organisations, all enhanced by state-of-the art multimedia and engaging design material.

The Commission's communication campaign #WhatDoYouSee? was rolled out in seven African countries with a reach of 88 % of the targeted audience and an engagement rate of 3.8 %. The campaign built on the stories of beneficiaries of EU's partnerships across physical and digital media and was amplified by national influencers with large social media followings. This endeavour demonstrated the importance of engaging with our audience through common values and interests.

The Commission's flagship event, the European Development Days, was organised online for the first time on 15-16 June 2021 and gathered a record-breaking 19 969 platform visits and 46 051 unique session views. The InfoPoint pursued its online activities with 49 virtual conferences and 72 visits organised supporting the Commission's external communication and partnerships with policymakers, civil society, non-governmental organisations, and young people. Eleven Kapuscinski Development Lectures (KDL) were held online and in hybrid format and gathered more participants than ever (average of 555 per lecture compared to 250 the previous year).

5.4.2. Transparency

The Commission remains firmly committed to transparency in line with the new European Consensus on Development in which the EU and its Member States reaffirm their commitment to applying the key principles of development effectiveness. The Commission has continued to improve the

accountability and openness of its development assistance through publishing timely, comprehensive and forward-looking data in line with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard, the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and Forward Spending Survey. It also completed its second reporting on Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) and continued to report on Team Europe's global response to COVID-19 through the joint reporting mechanism.

The Commission constantly invests in more complete and high-quality publication of data and aid information and remains committed to developing innovative tools to present and use development cooperation data more effectively. For instance, the Joint Programming (JP) tracker was revamped in late 2021 to also offer an overview of Team Europe initiatives (TEIs) and was renamed the TEI-JP tracker. In the tracker, information can be found on the TEIs and JP process being pursued in each partner country or region, participating 'Team Europe' members, and any supporting material, such as JP documents and ODA infographics. It is also possible to explore aggregated information on TEIs and JP across regions by utilising the dashboards. Moreover, the Commission continues to improve performance and user-friendliness of the EU Aid Explorer tool, which allows users to freely explore EU and Member States' spending on official development assistance. The Commission furthermore continues to engage in bilateral outreach with its Member States on transparency issues. For example, it established a Team Europe group on the 'IATI Connect' platform, a space where European providers can share and exchange knowledge, experiences and best practices on IATI data reporting and data use in order to improve transparency of development assistance and strengthen development cooperation.

5.4.3. Learning

The Commission services organise a wide range of learning events to train colleagues in Delegations and at HQ on political priorities and key thematic development topics. The learning offer is also often open to a wider community, such as to practitioners from Member States or, in the case of the e-learning platform EU International Partnerships Academy, to the general public.

In 2021, the Commission services for Learning development adjusted learning methods to reflect the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, offering virtual classes and live online events that replaced traditional classroom training. In 2021, almost 600 online learning events in different formats were organised and involved 9 155 participants. Participants from EU Delegations represented 67 % of the total. The themes covered a large range of topics such as development policies, thematic areas, aid delivery methods, finance and IT systems.

In addition, the EU International Partnerships Academy, the Commission's first open online learning platform, welcomed 5 040 new users in 2021, which represents a 45 % increase in the number of registered users in one year, reaching more than 16 000 currently enrolled users in total. The platform has delivered more than 3 000 certificates, made available over 360 different open learning resources and reached more than 750 000 visits. User's overall satisfaction rate with the Academy is 88 %, based on the results obtained from the satisfaction survey sent to all users in December 2021.